



New and Uniform Edition.

WORKS, DOCTRINAL AND PRACTICAL,

REV THOMAS HOUSTON, D.D.

CONTENTS OF VOL.

PARENTAL DUTIES.

THE ADOPTION OF SONS.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE PAPACY.

[Now Ready.]

CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

YOUTHFUL DEVOTEDNESS.

FELLOWSHIP MEETINGS.

[Now Ready.]

CONTENTS OF VOL. III.

A PRACTICAL TREATISE ON BAPTISM.

NARRATIVE OF COVENANTING.

[Now

VOL. IV. will contain—

SPIRITUAL CONSOLATION IN DIFFICULT
TIMES.

LIFE OF REV. JOHN LIVINGSTONE,
HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION.

RACE.

[Ready in Nov

WORKS

DOCTRINAL AND PRACTICAL

OF THE

REV. THOMAS HOUSTON, D.D.

PRINTED BY THE
COMMERCIAL PRINTING COMPANY
FOR

ANDREW ELLIOT, .
SIMPKIN, MARSHALL, AND CO.,
DAVID BRYCE AND SON,
CHRISTOPHER AITCHISON,

EDINBURGH.
LONDON.
GLASGOW.
BELFAST.

WORKS

DOCTRINAL AND PRACTICAL

OF THE

REV. THOMAS HOUSTON, D.D.,

KNOCKBRACKEN.

In Four Volumes.

VOL. III.

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

A MEMORIAL OF COVENANTING.

EDINBURGH:

ANDREW ELLIOT, 17 PRINCES STREET.

1876.

CONTENTS OF VOL. III.

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

	PAGE
PREFACE, .	xi
INTRODUCTION,	1
CHAPTER I. The Sacraments of the Church,	8
,, II. Institution of Baptism,	19
,, III. Special Ends of Christian Baptism,	32
,, IV. The Doctrines exhibited in Baptism,	47
,, V. Subjects of Baptism,	58
,, VI. The Mode and Place of Baptism,	87
,, VII. Preparation for Baptism by Christian Parents,	106
,, VIII. Engagement and Duties connected with Baptism. .	115
,, IX. Christian Education,	131
,, X. Improvement of Baptism, and Encouragements arising from Baptismal Dedication,	163
,, XI. Abuses of Baptism, Neglect, and Apostasy,	177
,, XII. Special Directions to Persons concerned in the Administration of Baptism,	190
,, XIII. Salvation and Death of Infants,	222
CONCLUSION,	238
APPENDIX,	243

MEMORIAL OF COVENANTING.

	PAGE
PREFACE,	257
INTRODUCTION,	259
CHAPTER I. Condensed View of the Nature of Covenanting,	264
,, II. The Doctrine of Covenant-Obligation,	275
,, III. The British Covenants : their History, Contents, and Uses,	283
The Solemn League and Covenant,	290
IV. The continued Obligation and Renewal of the British Covenants,	303
Testimonies in favour of the continued Obligation of the British Covenants,	305
V. Renovation of the Covenants, National and Solemn League, by the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland and Ireland,	311
Meeting of Irish Synod for Covenant-Renovation,	330
VI. The Effects of Covenant-Renovation — Special Duties incumbent on Covenanters,	343
CONFESSION OF SINS,	357
BOND OF COVENANTING,	366
THE SOLEMN LEAGUE AND COVENANT,	373
APPENDIX,	391

I.

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

P R E F A C E.



IT was originally the Author's intention to have given at the end of this work, in a separate form, a few brief expositions of passages of Scripture which immediately refer to Baptism, and to have appended a few addresses to parents and others, founded on Scripture declarations, as connected with the administration of the ordinance. The size of the work, however—exceeding considerably the limits which he had at first assigned to it—has induced him to withhold this matter at present. He may hereafter publish it, either in a second edition, should it be called for, or in a separate form. He would have desired, moreover, to have offered a fuller discussion of some of the views which have been propounded, concerning the state of infants, as connected with the atonement, or as affected by baptism, than has been attempted in the chapter on Infant Salvation and in the Appendix. The design of the treatise being practical, made him, however, reluctant to give a controversial aspect to any part of the subject; and the limited space reserved for the illustration and defence of doctrine, must plead his apology for not introducing some topics to which he would gladly have adverted, and for handling some others so slightly. On a subject on which so much has been written as Baptism, and on which the sentiments of professed Christians have been so much divided, the Author can hardly expect that this little work will afford anything like full satisfaction to many into whose hands it may come. He

can truly declare, that he would not willingly employ any form of expression that would wound the feelings of those whom he esteems as brethren in Christ, even when controverting sentiments which he believes to be erroneous. His anxious desire has been to speak the truth in love; and he shall feel truly happy if aught that he has advanced prove the means of leading the members of the Church, while holding the truth as it is in Jesus, to adorn it by a consistent, godly practice. Our Lord's rule will prove in the end the grand way of arriving at unity of heart and sentiment in a Christian profession—"IF ANY MAN WILL DO HIS WILL, HE SHALL KNOW OF THE DOCTRINE WHETHER IT BE OF GOD."

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

INTRODUCTION.

“**HOLINESS TO THE LORD**” is the appropriate motto of all Gospel institutions. Designed to display the authority of the King and Head of the Church, they are, at the same time, appointed as channels for the conveyance of his grace to the heirs of salvation; and the fruit and evidence of deriving benefit from their observance, is growing conformity to his moral likeness. “Beholding,” in the glass of sacred ordinances, “the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.”¹

It has been justly remarked, that any truth professed which does not influence the heart and life is not in reality believed. The strongest denial, the most injurious rejection of the truth, is an inconsistent and unholy practice. The doctrines of the Word are doctrines according to godliness. The grace that brings present, and issues in final and complete salvation, effectually “teaches to deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.”²

That use of religious ordinances which does not purify and elevate the moral nature is a practical denial of their obligation and beneficial design,—dishonouring to their glorious Author, and tending to confirm men in despising and rejecting them. There are none of the institutions of our holy religion whose nature has been more misunderstood, or that have been more perverted from their proper use, than those which are designated the sacraments of the new economy. While it is admitted by all classes of Christians—save the peculiar society,³ who deny that material elements are in any way to be employed, and who thus virtually abolish the sacramental institutions

¹ 2 Corinthians iii. 18.

² Titus ii. 14.

³ The Society of Friends.

altogether—that these are to be regarded as the most solemn and significant of the ordinances of Christianity, there are very marked and wide differences of sentiment in relation to their nature and designs. A large number of professed Protestants appear to have imbibed Rome's cardinal error, and to regard the sacraments as an *opus operatum*; and to view them, irrespective of faith in the Word, or any right moral character, as the channels for conveying grace, and an infallible means of final salvation. Others entertain the most vague and confused notions on the subject; and, from superstitious feelings, imagine that there is some virtue in the sacraments themselves, and some mysterious benefit to be derived from them, though they are unable to tell how this virtue is communicated, or wherein the special benefit consists. Again, there are others, and among these are divines of high standing, who regard the Christian sacraments as being only outward badges of a profession, or as merely commemorative institutions, and not in any sense as means for communicating grace to the heirs of salvation.

Need we wonder that, with such diversified and erroneous views of the nature and ends of the sacraments, their proper practical use should so generally be overlooked, and that their abuse should be so extensively prevalent? Without referring particularly to the other sacrament, the Lord's Supper, it must be apparent to any thoughtful observer that, at the present day, comparatively a small number, even in the Protestant churches, entertain right views of the solemn nature and signification of baptism, even when they seek access to it, or recognize afterwards the weighty obligation which it imposes, or labour habitually to make a suitable improvement of the ordinance.

Amidst "the falling away" that is represented as characteristic of the last days, and in "the perilous times" that are predicted to come, it seems not improbable that erroneous doctrinal sentiments in relation to the ordinance of baptism, and the perverted use of it, may become widely prevalent. "One Lord, one baptism," are two main articles of the faith once delivered to the saints—two essential and leading principles of our holy religion. The grand device of the enemy is to lead Christians away from subjection to Christ the Lord; and this he does by introducing diverse and conflicting opinions in relation to baptism, equivalent to manifold and opposing baptisms, and by perverting the ordinance in practice.

What is the figment of *baptismal regeneration* but a subtile and powerful device of the father of lies, to lead men to regard their salvation as infallibly secured by connection with the Church, and by means of a ritual service; and to deny the necessity of a spiritual renovation of the heart and life through faith in the Word? Should those who avow this unscriptural dogma obtain the ascendancy in the national Church of England, then a chief article of the Reformation—the grand doctrine of justification by faith—Luther’s article of a standing or a falling church, will have been abandoned, and the national profession of “the chief of Protestant nations,” will be conformed in one of its cardinal principles to the Romish apostasy. If the highest authority recognized in the English Church should pronounce baptismal regeneration to be the doctrine which all her ministers are bound to maintain and teach, in virtue of their connection with the establishment; and good men, in consequence, become liable to be denuded of their office, and be exposed to civil penalties for holding a contrary sentiment, then the Puritan persecutions may be again renewed, and the maintenance of a good conscience may subject evangelical confessors to severe trials. However much such events are to be deplored, the recent hesitating decision of the Committee of Privy Council, the restless activity of the Puseyite and Ritualistic parties, the feeble and powerless resistance of the bench of bishops to the inroads of vital error, with its open avowal by some of them, changes in political parties, and the exercise of the royal supremacy through the minister of the day, render them not unlikely to occur under the last assaults of Antichrist.

It need not be thought strange that evangelical clergymen of the Church of England, who, even while they held their station as ministers of the establishment, could not swallow the dogma of baptismal regeneration, in the Puseyite sense of the phrase, should, on leaving the Church, come to entertain strong objections to infant baptism. The sentiments taught in some of the formularies of the Church on this head are seemingly so repugnant to Scripture, the abuses are so flagrant, and the delusion of resting on a mere external rite for salvation is so fearful, that the consciences of men enlightened by the Word of God cannot but revolt from them; and they are naturally led to question or deny the utility of an ordinance which is administered without distinction to the children of believers, and to those of the openly profane, and in which both are

equally represented as, by participation in the baptismal rite, made children of God, and heirs of the kingdom of heaven. This appears to us to account for the fact, observable of late, that esteemed ministers of the Church of England, when compelled, through tenderness of conscience, to relinquish her fellowship, have not unfrequently, at the same time, separated themselves from the doctrine of the universal Church on the subject of the baptism of the infant children of Christians, and have joined themselves to a party that, however estimable many of its ministers and members, is, on this point, not identified with the church of the apostles, or of the Reformation. Thus a great *practical abuse* of the baptismal ordinance, equally with a gross doctrinal error in relation to it, has served to mar the unity of the Church, foment dissensions, and, what is still worse, tends to lull vast multitudes in a fatal delusion with regard to the matters of their eternal salvation.¹

There are various other practical evils arising from ignorance of the nature and design of baptism, and from neglect of recognizing its obligation and privileges, which loudly call for a remedy. While great numbers have no right ideas whatever on the subject, and their reception of baptism must be viewed as a grievous desecration of a holy ordinance, it is to be feared that not a few, even of the best classes of church members, likewise err, either through not duly considering the solemnity and importance of the initiatory sacrament, or through not improving it aright, after they have been admitted to its participation. Almost universally throughout Christian congregations, it is observable that much less solemnity accompanies the administration of baptism than the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Parents, when seeking the ordinance for their children, are less careful to make preparation for coming to the institution, and other members of the Church do not regard themselves as having any deep personal interest in the matter. The young who witness the celebration hardly inquire what is meant by the service; and few think afterwards of betaking themselves to the performance of the duties which the baptismal ordinance plainly inculcates. In some cases, so little solemnity is attached to the initiatory sacrament of the Church, that it is dispensed by Presbyterian ministers in private, the avocations of the world hardly being suspended for a few minutes, or as a mere appendage to a convivial entertainment.

How few Christian parents properly lay to heart the high

¹ *On Baptismal Regeneration.* See Appendix.

privilege to themselves and their children of baptism ; or consider seriously, after obtaining it, their solemn and weighty obligations to special parental duties ! How few make baptismal dedication a subject of fervent pleading at the mercy-seat, or employ it as an argument for obtaining the blessings which they supplicate for their children ! Of the young, who are baptized in infancy, how few there are who become early conscious of their obligation to be the Lord's, or who claim its exalted privileges ; or who, in the spring-time of life, walk worthy of the covenant of their youth !

If we inquire after the source of these manifold evils, we apprehend it may be traced, in a great measure, to the want of proper instructions on the nature and design of baptism. While the institution has been discussed *controversially*, and much pains have been taken to determine who are the proper *subjects* of baptism, and the *mode* of its administration, it is to be deeply regretted that the practical value and improvement of the ordinance have seldom been handled, according to their intrinsic importance, either in the pulpit or from the press. The Church has, in consequence, suffered much. The import of one of the most impressive and significant rites of our holy religion has been sadly overlooked or misapprehended ; the weighty obligations which it involves have not been felt ; and the holy confidence and consolation, which a due consideration of baptismal dedication are so well fitted to inspire, are not enjoyed. The excellent Cotton Mather relates of himself, that he was accustomed frequently to give thanks to God for his baptism, as well as to make it an argument in prayer ; and Matthew Henry, the commentator, speaks of his early dedication having been to him the source of unspeakable blessings. The experience of all devoted servants of God has been similar, as often as they have reflected on the privileges and obligations resulting from their baptism. This institution they have regarded with endearing and fond interest, as manifesting towards them the singular condescension and compassion of its glorious Author. They have recognized it as designed to separate and distinguish them from others, and to set them apart to be the Lord's ; and they have regarded it as pledging them, in the most solemn and formal manner, to be " holy in all manner of conversation." The baptismal vow has furnished one of the strongest and most prevalent pleas at the mercy-seat, when they sought blessings for themselves and their children ; and their sweetest consolations and most joyful hopes have sprung

from reflecting on the nature and design of the sacred rite by which they were engaged to be the Lord's, and in which He graciously presented Himself to them as their God and Portion.

If such experience is more rarely to be met with in our day than in former times, this may be ascribed, in a great measure, to the circumstance that definite practical views of the baptismal rite are not inculcated or entertained; and that, in consequence, the special duty of improving our baptism, for edification or comfort or confidence, is greatly neglected. As not unfrequently happens, in doctrinal discussions about the nature or objects of faith, the *actual exercise of faith* itself is forgotten; so controversies about baptism have often served to turn away the attention from that which is of primary importance—the connection of the ordinance with the renovation of the heart and with holiness of the life.

The design of the following treatise is to supply a desideratum which must have been often felt by faithful ministers when called to administer baptism, and by godly parents, when reflecting on their own obligations and on those of their children; and by others who are concerned for the prosperity of the Church, and for the interests of vital godliness, when urging young persons to Christian devotedness. It is intended to be a manual of preparatory instruction for Christian parents, when about to undertake baptismal vows in behalf of their children. It aims to furnish to them practical directions concerning their future duties in the family. Scriptural views are presented, in relation to some topics which must always be felt to be of absorbing interest to Christian parents—the salvation of infants, and their future condition when removed by death. The special duties of the Church,—ministers, office-bearers, and people,—to her baptized children, are exhibited with a minuteness and particularity of detail which the intrinsic importance of the subject, as well as the infrequency of its discussion may well excuse. And, finally, the baptized youth of the Church, a most important class of her members, are instructed in the necessity of an early recognition of their baptismal dedication, and directed how the ordinance may confer a blessing in the way of a suitable improvement.

The Author is fully persuaded that nothing can produce godly practice but the truth spoken in love. He has aimed, therefore, to present scriptural statements and arguments in relation to the nature and design of baptism, in all simplicity and plainness; and though he was sincerely anxious not to give

a controversial aspect to the discussion, he felt that he could not properly withhold some notice of the *subjects* of baptism, and of the *mode* and *place* of administration. He may be allowed to say that his earnest desire has ever been to know the mind of the Spirit, and to bow implicitly to the authority of God speaking in his Word. As his great aim has been to exhibit an important ordinance of the Church, as an eminent manifestation of the wisdom and condescension of her exalted Head, and as a means of universal holiness, he indulges the hope that even those who may see cause to differ from some of the doctrinal views advanced, may yet find in this treatise matter which they will regard as suited to promote the edification of the Church, and the revival of true religion.

That the King of Zion may render the work subservient to the promotion of his glory, the conversion of sinners, and the establishment and consolation of the people of God, is the earnest desire of

THE AUTHOR.

CHAPTER I.

THE SACRAMENTS OF THE CHURCH.

I. *Their Nature, Institution, Import, and Design.*

THE Word of the Gospel is the grand means of communicating to the children of men the blessings of eternal salvation. To magnify his own grace, and in condescension to human infirmity, God has appointed, besides, other ordinances, by which He confirms his good-will to his people, and confers upon them spiritual and eternal blessings. These are the sacraments of the Church—institutions which have existed from the earliest ages, and have always been regarded as of peculiar significancy and importance.

The term *sacrament* has been employed with considerable variety of meaning and allusion, when applied to the ordinances of the Church. It has been regarded as expressive of the peculiarly *sacred* character of the institutions which it designates. The word, of Latin origin, has been supposed by some to be borrowed from the *military oath* which the Roman soldiers took to their general, which was called *sacramentum*; and religious rites are thought to be thus named, as implying special devotedness to Christ, the Captain of salvation.¹ It appears more likely that the term came to be used by ecclesiastical writers in a peculiar sense, from the circumstance, that in the Vulgate and older Latin versions of the New Testament, the term *μυστήριον* was most usually translated into the word

¹ The Bishop of Lincoln, in his able work on Tertullian, contends for this derivation of the term. He thinks that the word being used to signify the promise or vow in baptism, came to denote the rite itself, and afterwards it included every religious ceremony, and actually expressed the whole Christian doctrine.—See *Kaye's Tertullian*, p. 356.

The early Christian fathers call Christians, as their favourite appellation, “soldiers of Christ; Christ is styled their Commander; the world, the flesh, and the devil their enemies; Christian graces are their armour, martyrdom their crown, the baptismal promise, or the eucharistical profession, their oath of allegiance.”—See *Halley on the Sacraments*, Part I., p. 14.

sacramentum. And as the ancient "*mysterics*" were considered peculiarly solemn rites of worship, so the term *sacrament* was viewed as suitably employed to designate ordinances, which contain a sacred representation of spiritual things, and which are to be approached with peculiar feelings of holy awe and reverence.¹

It is essential to a sacrament that there should be an outward and sensible sign, representing things spiritual, in connection with a Divine promise. Hence it has been concisely defined by one of the Schoolmen,² as a "*visible sign of an invisible grace.*" Applying the term in a wide sense, various appointments under the Old Testament have been designated sacraments—as Noah's ark, the rainbow, the manna in the wilderness, the Levitical sacrifices, &c. Whether such an application is proper or not, it is evident that these were extraordinary and temporary, and limited in their nature and design. The Church on earth, however, has never wanted, and never will be without ordinary sacraments, assuring and confirming to her true members the favour and love of her exalted Head, and sealing them to the day of redemption. There are no sacraments in the Church triumphant in glory. None are needed; for the presence of the Lamb, and the blessed fruition of God himself, supply the place of all media of intercourse and communication. But from the beginning to the end of time, these sacred appointments have been in use in the Church on earth, and have subserved to her the most valuable purposes. Under the "Edenic dispensation," the TREE OF LIFE was the sacramental pledge of the promise of life to Adam and all his posterity, on the performance of the conditions of the federal engagement. *Circumcision* was the appointed sacrament of initiation under the patriarchal economy; and it, together with the passover, continued as "signs and seals" to ancient believers as long as the Church existed under the Mosaic dispensation.

The New Testament sacraments, Baptism and the Lord's Supper—the one the badge of discipleship, and the other the ordinance of nourishment—are appointed to continue in the Christian Church till Christ's second coming. Thus, from the

¹ In Ephesians i. 9, God is said, in the Vulgate version, to make known, "*Sacramentum volitionis*"—the "sacrament of his will." In Ephesians v. 32, when the apostle, speaking of marriage, says, "This is a great mystery," the Vulgate has it, "*Magnum sacramentum*"—a "great sacrament;" and in 1 Tim. iii. 16, "Great is the mystery of godliness" is rendered "Great is the sacrament of godliness."

² Peter Lombard.

dawn of time till the consummation of all things, during the whole period of man's continuance on earth, and of the world's history, sacraments exist as means of intercourse with God, and of blessing to the Church. Though no sacraments are *absolutely necessary* to salvation—though they were not designed to bring man into a state of salvation, but rather suppose him to be already the subject of Divine favour—they display the admirable wisdom, condescension, and love of their glorious Author, towards those for whose benefit they are appointed. He knows our frame, and has wisely and graciously adapted his method of intercourse and communication to our condition and circumstances. We are capable of receiving more powerful impressions from objects presented to the outward senses, than merely from words spoken; and a well-executed picture will often affect us more forcibly, and leave more lasting traces on the mind, than an abstract statement or a description, however exact and appropriate. Besides, the blessings of redemption are provided for our bodies as well as our spirits, and it is therefore suitable that they should be communicated, in part, by sensible signs, and that there should be visible marks of our consecration, and of our inheritance of eternal life. We are here in a state of childhood, as heirs in their minority; and in condescension to our weakness, there are given to us confirmations of the Divine faithfulness, fitted to impress our senses, and to represent the grand truths of salvation and our personal interest therein. And, as our faith is weak, God in the sacraments has condescended to give us such pledges of his faithful word and sure covenant as are used among men to confirm a promise and ratify a solemn engagement. Thus “by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie,” they have “strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them.”

The sacraments have been designated “signs and seals” of the Covenant of grace. This blessed compact, the “counsel of peace,” is the foundation of all God's merciful dealings with the human family—the charter of eternal salvation. It is “ordered in all things and sure,” embracing everything that concerns the interests of the heirs of salvation, in soul and body, and for time and eternity. The enjoyment of saving blessings is inseparably connected with the administration of the covenant of grace. Sinners are delivered from condemnation when they are brought into “the bond of the covenant.” Awakened to a sense of their perishing condition, by faith they “take

hold" of it. In the dispensation of Gospel privileges, they come to the Mediator, and He "shows them his covenant." The believer triumphs in death when, with the sweet singer of Israel, he is enabled to declare, "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, . . . and this is all my salvation and all my desire." And the glory and fellowship of the redeemed in heaven will be to serve before the throne, encircled by the bright token of the covenant—a "rainbow in sight like unto an emerald."¹

The sacraments are instituted to be visible signs and seals of this gracious transaction. As *signs*, they exhibit symbolically the spiritual provision made for human salvation, and present the different parts of it to the mind in an affecting and impressive manner. The sacraments are visible representations, having a spiritual significancy, and pointing to things unseen and eternal. They have no natural or necessary connection in themselves with the objects or blessings which they symbolize; but yet, as being of Divine appointment, they are instructive spiritual symbols, adapted to shadow forth, and significantly to display the objects of faith and Christian hope. Like a well-executed and striking picture, they impress the mind as with a present reality, and in them, as through a glass, we behold the glory of the Lord, and the riches of the grace of the covenant. They are suited to man's nature and condition, bodily and mental, and are distinguished by the most comprehensive significancy. Hence an early Christian father styles the sacraments "*a visible Word*,"² and they may be properly termed, "THE WHOLE GOSPEL IN SYMBOL—A SACRAMENTAL GOSPEL."

The sacraments are likewise "seals" of the covenant of grace. Abraham is said to have received circumcision, "*a sign and seal of the righteousness of faith*."³ Of the various uses of seals, the principal is to confirm and ratify. For this purpose, the seal is appended to a public document, attesting its validity, and confirming its contents to those to whom it refers. The sacraments are, in like manner, God's visible seals, designed to confirm the faith of the Church in his everlasting covenant, and to ratify to them who are actually in the covenant all spiritual blessings. They are properly *seals on God's part*, as in believing we set to our seal that God is true.

¹ 2 Sam. xxiii. 5; Ezek. xx. 37; Isa. lvi. 6; Heb. xii. 24; Ps. xxv. 14; Rev. iv. 3.

² Augustine.

³ Romans iv. 11.

The sacraments, as *signs*, address the senses; as *seals*, they encourage and strengthen faith. The covenant of redemption has been properly styled, "*A cluster of precious promises.*" The sacraments may be said to be the authoritative confirmation of the good Word spoken, the visible pledge appended to the gracious promise, displaying the kind intentions of Him who makes it, and securing its enjoyment to those for whom it was designed. They are given that we "might have strong consolation." Like a father showing to his child the title-deeds of the inheritance which is secured to him, so God, in the sacraments, confirms immutably to his people the blessings of the covenant. Or, as the royal seal appended to a public document, they hold forth a chartered salvation, sealed and sure to all who have "fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them."¹

A sacrament being appointed to aid our apprehension of spiritual things by means of sensible objects, necessarily consists of two parts—the *sign*, and the *thing signified*, which are sometimes styled the *matter* of the sacrament. The sign is something positive and visible, and is appointed to hold forth to us spiritual objects. The outward signs, or material elements in the sacraments of the New Testament, are *water* in the one, and *bread and wine* in the other. Christ and the benefits of the covenant of grace are the things signified by these sacramental symbols.

The connection between the signs and the spiritual objects denoted by them, constitute the *form* of the sacraments. This connection is neither *corporeal*, as between two objects placed in contact, nor properly *spiritual*, as that which exists between Christ and his people; but is *sacramental*, depending wholly on the institution of Christ, by which a Divine command, imposing an obligation to observe the ordinance, is connected with a Divine promise of blessing upon the observance. Between the sign and the thing signified there is thus established a *moral* relation and union, by which he who rightly uses the sign becomes partaker of the spiritual benefits which it represents. In virtue of the Divine appointment and promise, faithful recipients are assured that they will not partake of the sacraments in vain. Their faith is confirmed

¹ In accordance with the view which is given above, Luther appositely says, "In the sacrament of baptism, God binds Himself to thee in a covenant full of grace and consolation;" and again, "God is faithful to his promises, the sign of which I have received in baptism."

and strengthened, and they enjoy, with the material elements, spiritual and eternal blessings.

From the union of the outward elements, and the things which they denote, arises *sacramental phraseology*, by which the terms denoting the sign and the things signified are used interchangeably. Thus Christ is termed "our passover;" circumcision is called "the covenant," the bread in the Lord's Supper is named the "body" of Christ.¹ The sacramental union so connects the objects that, by a figure of speech common to all languages, the one may be predicated of the other. Hence, throughout the Scriptures, we find the sign designated by the thing signified, as when sanctification of heart is called circumcision.² The effect of the thing signified is ascribed to the sign, as to baptism is ascribed regeneration,³ and what is proper to the sign, or to the thing signified, is interchanged in the application. The *breaking* of the bread is applied to Christ's body, and *remission of sins*, which is the fruit of grace communicated, is ascribed to external baptism.⁴ This phraseology, which, when understood figuratively, is proper and expressive, has often been grossly misapplied, in a literal sense, to support the dogma of baptismal regeneration, and even to make out the change of the material elements into the substance of the spiritual objects, in transubstantiation. Such a mode of interpretation is utterly opposed to the received usage of all languages, and amounts to a manifest perversion of the sacred writers.

The *Author* of the sacraments is God himself; and as they are seals of the covenant of grace under every dispensation of that blessed transaction, they are to be regarded as instituted immediately by the exalted Mediator. Thus the Divine appearance which was made to Abraham, when circumcision was appointed, was a manifestation of the Redeemer to come. The "God of glory," who appeared to him in Mesopotamia, and who again conversed with him on the plains of Mamre, was the same that, in declaring the covenant, said, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be thou perfect." "I will be a God to thee, and thy seed after thee."⁵ It was the same glorious personage who instituted the passover; for He it was who redeemed Israel out of Egypt, and to whom is ascribed every part of the wondrous deliverance. When the Redeemer had finished his work on earth, and as He stood on the threshold of his mediatorial throne, He spoke with royal

¹ 1 Cor. v. 7; Gen. xvii. 11; Matt. xxvi. 26.

² Rom. xi. 29.

³ Titus iii. 5.

⁴ Acts xxii. 16.

⁵ Gen. xvii. 1, 8.

authority, "Go ye into all the world, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and lo, I am with you always." And at an era, distinguished for the most solemn and affecting events that ever occurred in the history of our world, the night in which He was betrayed, He instituted the sacrament of the supper. Thus all the sacraments of the Church have a Divine origin, and are the appointments of the glorious King of Zion. God is primarily to be recognized in these sacred institutions. They display the perfections, and show forth the glory of their Author, and are appointed for *ends* worthy of Him who ordained them.

II. *The ends of the Sacraments.*

The ends of the sacraments are diversified and important. While some are specific and peculiar to each sacrament, there are others common to both. Thus baptism is a sign of *entrance into the covenant*, and *initiation in the Church*, and is, in consequence, only *once* to be applied. The Lord's Supper is symbolical of *nourishment, invigoration, and comfort*, and is, therefore, to be *frequently* observed, inasmuch as the renewal of these benefits is always needed, and should constantly be desired.

Of the *common ends* of the sacraments, it may be mentioned that—

1. They represent and offer to us, by sensible signs, *the covenant of peace, its blessed Mediator, and all its benefits*. They invite and encourage to accept of Christ and salvation through Him by a living faith; and to those who so receive Him, they confirm and secure the righteousness of the covenant, and all its concomitant blessings. The sacraments thus not only seal the grand promise on God's part, "I will be thy God;" but on ours likewise, they ratify the engagement to be the Lord's. They are the seal of our profession—the "confirmation of our professed subjection to the Gospel of Christ."¹

2. They are, moreover, an expressive testimony of the *union and communion* which saints have, not only with Christ their Head, but also with fellow-saints as members of the same mystical body. These ordinances declare our gathering together into the one "family which in heaven and earth is named after Christ," and our joint participation in all the privileges that pertain to the adoption of sons.

¹ 2 Corinthians ix. 13.

3. They serve, furthermore, to *perpetuate the remembrance of God's covenant*, and of its distinguishing blessings. As a lively memorial of the purpose and plan of eternal redemption, and of the wonderful accomplishment of that purpose by the death of the Mediator, they preserve and transmit the record of the most important events that have taken place in the universe. The covenant and redemption finished centre in Christ, and the sacraments are specially appointed as memorials of Him, to continue to the end of time. They are memorials of love, erected by the hands of devout worshippers, each of whom joyfully professes, as he observes them, "*I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.*"¹

4. Again, the sacraments may be regarded as *distinctive badges* of the Church of Christ, and of a profession of true religion. In observing them, we profess the Christian faith, declare that we are joined to his people, and openly avouch the Lord to be our God. Thus do we evidence that we have become separate from the rest of the world, and that we have chosen our lot with the Lord's people. "One shall say, I am the Lord's."²

5. They are, besides, *symbols of dedication and devotedness to Christ* and his service. As the Israelites were "baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea," when they were devoted to the observance of all the ordinances of the ritual of Moses, so, in the Christian sacraments, those who observe them are solemnly given up to God to be his, and for Him wholly and for ever. The name of Christ, the glorious Captain of salvation, is impressed on these ordinances, and on those who have recourse to them, to attest that they have enlisted under his banner, to fight against his enemies—the devil, the world, and the flesh; to renounce every other master, and to "serve God in holiness and righteousness" all the days of their life. The subjects of both sacraments professedly give themselves to God as a "living sacrifice," which is their "reasonable service," and they "yield themselves to God, as alive from the dead, and their members as instruments of righteousness unto holiness." Self-dedication is a principal and essential part of holiness; and the sacraments, as appointed and eminent means for this end, conduce to advancement in sanctification. Those who partake of the Christian sacraments should always regard themselves as *dedicated ones*, solemnly bound to walk in newness of life, and pledged to all holy obedience.

¹ Psalm xlv. 17.

² Isaiah xlv. 5.

6. They *confirm and strengthen the faith and hope of eternal life.* The covenant and promises which they seal provide eternal felicity for the heirs of salvation. The blood of Christ, which they represent and exhibit, is the ransom price of the inheritance; and the spiritual provision which they minister is designed to nourish up the soul unto life everlasting. Through these ordinances, as through glasses exquisitely prepared, believers obtain glimpses of the King in his beauty, and the far distant land. "The King is held in the galleries." The faithful are "sealed till the day of redemption," and obtain preparation for the second coming of the Lord, as with fervent desires and elevated joy they anticipate his appearance.

Contemplated in their institution, significance, and ends, how precious and valuable are the sacraments of the new covenant! With affecting simplicity, and attractive lustre, they display the dignity, grace, and condescension of their exalted Author. As the Church's Head, King of kings and Lord of glory, He has ordained them to be the expression of his ineffable love to sinners—to perpetuate the remembrance of his wonderful works—and to be the means of communion with Himself, and of conferring boundless blessings upon his chosen people. He knows our frame, and remembers we are dust; and, in the sacraments, He adapts the symbols to our state of infirmity; and, through our external senses, conveys impressive instruction to our minds in relation to Divine mysteries—things spiritual and heavenly. He thus confirms to us his gracious Word, accepts our humble and imperfect acts of obedience, owns us as his, and seals us till the day of final redemption. In the one sacrament, the Lord of heaven, in amazing condescension, stoops down to notice the condition of helpless infancy, and to provide and secure for the seed of his servants the choicest and most enduring blessings. When, as exposed in the open field, they are lying in their blood, and no eye to pity them, in the ordinance of baptism He passes by—in their "time of love," He spreads the skirt of his garment over them, and says to them, "Live." He enters into covenant with them, and they become his.¹ They are introduced to his visible Church, and securities are entered and taken for their education and training for God's service here, and for the work and enjoyments of heaven. In the other sacrament, through the symbols of "a feast of fat things," prepared in the mountain of the Lord, believers are admitted to communion with the King

¹ Ezekiel xvi. 6, 8.

of glory. They remember his love more than wine, and He comes down to have fellowship with him. He brings them into his "banqueting house," while his "banner of love" is displayed around them. Christ Jesus, the Beloved, is set before them, evidently crucified among them. He shows them his covenant, confirms to them his love, and those exceeding great and precious promises through which all new covenant-blessings are conveyed to the heirs of salvation. The benefits of Christ's purchase are hereby sealed and made sure to the redeemed. They are enabled to rejoice in the remission of their sins, and to exult in the consolations of true religion. The secret of the Lord is with them. Faith and hope, and all holy graces, are invigorated; corruptions are mortified, and spiritual enemies subdued; and obtaining the earnest and pledge of future bliss, they lay hold on eternal life, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Such being the uses and high ends of the sacraments, Christians should regard them with deep and heartfelt interest, and should diligently labour to promote their proper observance. They were instituted by the sovereign authority of the King and Head of the Church, and were designed for the manifestation of his glory. Christians should attend upon them in professed subjection to their exalted King, adoring his majesty, and seeking the blessings of his throne and kingdom. They exhibit and bring near the covenant of free grace; and to the people of God, whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life, they confirm its precious promises, and ratify the possession of its blessed provisions. By means of these ordinances, believers should take hold of God's covenant, and visibly join themselves to the Lord, to be his servants for ever. To the Church of Christ, the sacraments are seals and distinct badges of membership, and ordained means of nourishment and establishment. Therefore should her faithful members greatly value these institutions, and labour diligently to promote their right celebration. To the saints, they are not only the distinctive mark of their separation from the world, and of their heavenly vocation, but are also the channel for conveying to them the richest blessings.

It is peculiarly incumbent, therefore, on all the followers of the Lamb, to entertain clear views of the nature and design of these holy ordinances, and to endeavour that others too should adopt just sentiments respecting them, and should wait upon their observance with right ends, and in a right spirit. Prevail-

ing abuses to be rectified, and the eminent benefits to be enjoyed by the Church and by individuals, should excite to earnest concern on this subject. The honour of Zion's King, the purity and prosperity of the Church, and the spiritual improvement of her members, all demand that these sacred ordinances should be diligently guarded against neglect and corruption; and that all prayerful efforts should be employed to diffuse the blessings connected with their scriptural administration. The Redeemer's promises, appended to the command given at their institution, guarantee to those who duly observe them the highest and most desirable blessings. "LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN UNTO THE END OF THE WORLD." "*Until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.*" "That ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." †

† Matthew xxviii. 20; xxvi. 29; Luke xxii. 30.

CHAPTER II.

INSTITUTION OF BAPTISM : PRE-INTIMATIONS — PREPARATIONS FOR IT.

WHILE both the sacraments of the new dispensation were instituted by Christ in his kingly character, there is an observable and remarkable difference in the time and circumstances of their institution. On the night in which He was betrayed—that night of deep and absorbing interest—He appointed the Lord's Supper ; and after partaking of the Paschal Feast with his disciples, He gave this proof of his unspeakable and unchangeable love, in appointing, to be observed till his second coming, the New Testament Passover. The ordinance of baptism was instituted after the Redeemer had risen from the dead, and on the eve of his ascension to glory. Having purchased eternal redemption, and instructed his apostles in the things pertaining to his kingdom, ere He ascended to his Father's house clothed in our nature, and entered upon his lofty administration in glory, He gave them his parting charge, and included in it the rite of baptism. The command to disciple and baptize is nearly connected with the injunction to preach the Gospel to every creature. It is a part of the "GREAT COMMISSION" — the foundation of the Christian ministry, a summary of Christian doctrine, the charter for the propagation of the Gospel, and the extension of the Church throughout the world. The blessed promise which is appended to the command is the stay and hope of faithful ministers, and the cheering assurance of the Redeemer's gracious presence in his Church, to the end of time.

If the Lord's Supper impressively reminds us of our Lord's condescension and love in suffering, and presents to us in lively symbols the crucified Saviour as the foundation of pardon and acceptance, the ordinance of baptism, in the circumstances of its institution, fixes the mind upon the Saviour's triumph and subsequent glory, assures us of the success of his cause in the world, and joyfully proclaims that of the "increase of his govern-

ment and peace there shall be no end." If in the one sacrament, we should seek to be with our Lord in his "temptations," and to have fellowship with Him in his sufferings, till our hearts are melted by the wondrous display of his love, and we learn to hate sin with a perfect hatred: in the other, we are called to rejoice that He has ascended up on high most gloriously, leading captivity captive, to receive and dispense gifts for the rebellious, that the Lord God may dwell among them.¹

Before considering the import of the last commission, as it relates to the rite of initiation, a brief reference to the *preparation* which was made for the appropriation of the ordinance of baptism to the Christian economy may not be unsuitable, especially as it may serve to illustrate the nature and design of the institution. Under the former economy, there were "*diverse baptisms*," as the original phrase signifies.² Jewish writers tell us that proselytes, in the later period of the Hebrew commonwealth, on being admitted to the fellowship of the Church, were required not only to submit to the rite of circumcision, but that they were also washed in water, as emblematical of separation from heathenism, and cleansing from moral impurity.³ When John, the forerunner, was sent to prepare the way of the Lord, he was styled by way of eminence, *the Baptist*. Adopting a rite, with the design of which his hearers had previously been familiar, he baptized the multitudes who resorted to him, thus designating them as a people prepared for the kingdom which was about to be established. John's ministry was not properly the commencement of the new dispensation. It was supplementary to the former economy; and, like the dawn before the risen day, it was the harbinger and preparation for the enlarged light and liberty of the Gospel. His was "the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins," and it was connected with the confession and forsaking of sin. "They were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins."⁴ John's baptism, though in some respects of the nature of a sacrament, was not designed to be permanent, and it did not supersede circumcision. His office was to direct men to the Saviour who was then come, and to prepare them for the spiritual kingdom that was shortly to be established. Hence he baptized all his disciples, male and

¹ Psalm lxxviii. 18.

² Hebrews ix. 10.

³ See *Halley on the Sacraments*, pp. 111-166; *Beecher on Baptism*, pp. 38-40.

⁴ Matthew iii. 6.

female, even though Jews, and irrespective of their previous character. He thus impressively taught the necessity of moral purity to admission to the kingdom of the Messiah, and pointed to cleansing in that Fountain which was to be opened by the sufferings and death of the Redeemer.

Our Lord himself voluntarily submitted to the baptism of John. Of this significant transaction, which may be regarded, too, as a preparation for the Christian sacrament, the Evangelist Matthew relates: "Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered Him."¹ Immediately after John had warned his hearers against resting in mere external purifications, and had explicitly declared the character and office of Christ, the Saviour came, and submitted Himself to the preparatory rite. He was perfectly without sin, and was therefore incapable of some of the chief ends of John's baptism, for which it was administered to others. But as He voluntarily bore our sins, He did not refuse the baptism of repentance and the remission of sins. He honoured a Divine ordinance, and received it as an appropriate consecration to his public work and offices. Chiefly, He designed by his baptism to show his intimate and full fellowship with his people. As in his circumcision, He openly testified that He was made under the law, and had communion with the Church of the Old Testament; so in his baptism, He proclaimed his fellowship with his saints still, in all acts and ordinances of holy obedience.² Hence, when the Baptist objected against baptizing Christ, because of his personal dignity, He replied: "Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." It is observable that our Lord never used the *plural* form in speaking of Himself. When He therefore said, "It becometh us," he meant John and all his genuine followers; and He

¹ Matthew iii. 13-15.

² Archbishop Usher, in his tract on *Immanuel*, judiciously remarks on this part of our Lord's conduct: "However *circumcision* was by right applicable only unto such as were dead in sins, and the uncircumcision of their flesh (Colossians ii. 11, 13), yet He in whom there was no body of the sins of the flesh to be put off, submitted Himself, notwithstanding, thereunto; not only to testify his communion with the fathers of the Old Testament, but also, by this means, to tender unto his Father a bond signed with his own blood, whereby He made himself, in our behalf, a debtor to the whole law.—Gal. v. 3."

recognized them as his fellow-servants in the kingdom of God. While He, as our blessed Surety and Substitute, offered a perfect obedience to the law of God, and magnified and made it honourable by his sufferings and death, "the righteousness of the law is fulfilled" in his people in their sanctification, by walking in all Divine institutions and commandments blamelessly. Thus our Lord's baptism, though not identical with the sacrament which He afterwards instituted, ministers to us important practical instruction. It exhibits the Redeemer honouring Divine ordinances. Thus He was publicly consecrated to the great work which He undertook from eternity; and though He was the Son, He is displayed in his baptism as the bond-servant of the Father; and He is seen holding intimate and endeared communion with his people, in the whole course of holy obedience.

In connection with the sacred rite, as administered to the Saviour at Jordan, was the descent of the Spirit, by a visible symbol; and the voice from the excellent glory proclaimed, at the same time, the Father's approval of his person and work. From the Redeemer's conduct and expressions in this scene of singular grandeur and solemnity, we should learn to set a high value on holy ordinances; and recognizing our baptismal engagement, we should, as pledged servants of God, esteem it an unspeakable honour to be associated with our blessed Lord and Master in the work of holy obedience.

The baptisms by our Lord and his disciples were preparatory, too, to the institution of the Christian sacrament. Soon after He had entered upon his public ministry, it is said by the evangelist, "After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judea; and there He tarried with them, and baptized."¹ And, in the beginning of the fourth chapter of the same Gospel, we are told concerning the baptisms by our Lord and his disciples, "When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John, though Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples." Multitudes had been baptized by John, but more were baptized at the Saviour's command, by his own disciples. This baptism was not identical with that which our Lord prescribed on the eve of his ascension to glory. It was simply preparatory, as was the baptism of John, and was intended to carry forward what the forerunner had begun. It furnished at once a striking testimony in favour of the ministry of the Baptist, and

¹ John iii. 22.

declared loudly the importance and necessity of moral purity to true discipleship, and the enjoyment of the privileges of the kingdom of God. In this preparatory rite the Saviour "baptized not, but his disciples," that He might appear not so much the *Author* as the *Object* of Christianity; to intimate that He entrusted the whole establishment and organization of the Church to his servants, acting under his instructions; and to prevent his disciples afterwards from attaching undue importance to the ordinance, as being administered by the hands of the Redeemer. In a like spirit, the Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthians, earnestly declares: "I thank God I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name." Thus did our Lord and his apostles guard the Church against that excessive overvaluing of outward rites, which afterwards so generally marked the declension of vital godliness, and the decay of the primitive churches, and which forms a principal trait of the corruption of some modern churches.

Although the act of singular and affecting condescension performed by our Lord immediately before his last agony—that of washing his disciples' feet—does not properly refer to Christian baptism, yet it was calculated to fix the minds of the apostles on the significancy of washing with water, and on the nature and design of a symbolical rite. To Peter's objection, expressive of his views of the Redeemer's dignity, and of his own unworthiness, our Lord impressively said, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me;" and afterwards, when the apostle, in the overflowing of fervent affection, sought to have various parts of his body washed, He declared, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all."¹ Thus the Saviour impressively taught that the spiritual privilege of which washing with water was an appropriate symbol, is essential to an interest in Christ and his salvation. The importance of the outward sign is shown by connecting it with the highest privilege which any can enjoy. And the nature of the symbol is clearly explained, when our Lord declares that total immersion is not required to constitute it, and that the ablution of a small portion of the body is as emblematical of perfect cleansing by his blood, as the washing of the whole person.

By such previous intimations, by such plain and repeated declarations and significant actions, were the minds of the

¹ John xiii. 10.

disciples and apostles of our Lord gradually led forward to the institution of the initiatory sacrament of the new economy. A due consideration of the observances to which we have referred may be of use to give Christians right views of the design of the ordinance of baptism, as well as to lead them to its practical improvement. Above all, let us ever remember, that if we are not washed in that precious blood of which water in baptism is the symbol, we have no part in Christ or his salvation. Sanctification alone constitutes the evidence of union to Christ, and a meetness for the heavenly inheritance. If by an outward rite, we have been dedicated to God by the affusion of a few drops of water, none may call in question the validity of such a baptism, for our Lord declares that those who are washed in one member, or by the application of a small portion of the liquid element, are "clean every whit." This ordinance, as well as that which was preparatory to its introduction, declares, in the loudest and most solemn terms, the grand fundamental truth: "WITHOUT HOLINESS NO MAN SHALL SEE THE LORD."¹ Moral purity, the spiritual cleansing of the whole heart and life, is indispensable to the enjoyment of the Divine favour, and all real blessing here; and devoid of it, none can enter the kingdom of glory.

The preparations which we have noticed, formed a most natural introduction to the appointment of baptism with water, as a standing ordinance in the Church. The Redeemer, having completed his great work, and given commandment to his apostles whom He had chosen, just before his ascension to glory, instituted the ordinance of baptism, to accompany the preaching of the Gospel throughout the world, and as a rite fundamental to the profession of Christianity, and to all right obedience to its precepts. Why the two sacraments should be instituted by our Lord in his own person, while He tabernacled on earth, and their appointment not deferred till the descent of the Spirit, and to the period when the Church was placed under its potent influence and direction, we may be unable fully to declare. As the apostles were *witnesses* of all that Jesus taught and did, it was suitable that to them especially there should be entrusted the first administration of sacred rites, which contained a seal of dedication, and a public profession of faith, and which held forth a lasting memorial of the great facts of human redemption. The apostles were the accredited witnesses of the doctrines to be believed. They were appointed to transmit the

¹ 1 Hebrews xii. 14.

report of the Gospel; and they were either present at the wondrous events connected with the Redeemer's last sufferings, or had heard them frequently declared by their exalted Master in public by signs, by prophecies and parables, and multiplied allusions.¹ There was, therefore, an obvious propriety in the Lord himself personally instituting these sacramental ordinances; and committing them, before his departure, to be dispensed by his apostles, and by their genuine successors—faithful ministers of the Gospel—till the end of time.

The *Divine appointment* of baptism, as recorded by one evangelist, is in these terms: "GO YE THEREFORE, AND TEACH ALL NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY GHOST: TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER I HAVE COMMANDED YOU: AND LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN UNTO THE END OF THE WORLD."² Another of the sacred writers, the Evangelist Mark, varies the terms of the commission, probably referring to another occasion, prior to the Saviour's departure, when He spoke to his disciples of their future service: "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*"³ The connection of the institution with the commission to "disciple all nations," and with the practical directions which the ministers of Christ are enjoined to inculcate, as well as the terms employed in appointing the ordinance, suggest some of the most important practical views of its nature and design. Baptism, as appointed by the Redeemer, was evidently intended to be the badge of separation from the world, and the seal of discipleship. It furnishes the proper basis and starting-point of all right religious training, and supplies the most powerful motives to all consistent holy obedience: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." A solemn pledge is given, on the one hand, that the baptized shall be thus taught, and they, on the other, are engaged to the strict observance of all holy precepts and institutions.⁴

The baptismal rite is ordained to be administered "in the name," or "into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." This evidently implies a professed

¹ See Hind's *History of the Rise and Early Progress of Christianity*, pp. 109, 110.

² Matthew xxviii. 19, 20.

³ Mark xvi. 15, 16.

⁴ *Ursini Doctrinæ Christianæ Compendium*, pp. 563, 564.

dependence on the glorious Object whose name is named upon us in baptism, and devoted subjection to Him. This object is a Triune God—Father, Son, and Spirit—the co-equal and co-essential persons of the blessed Godhead. Baptism, placed by its Divine Author at the entrance into the visible Church, as the rite of initiation, is thus a solemn profession of belief in the DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY—the grand fundamental article of revealed religion. Wherever the Church is planted, and as long as it exists on the earth, it is ordained that this public confession be made of God in his essential glory, and new covenant relations. Every member of the Church, by having instamped upon him the name of the blessed Trinity, becomes a standing witness to the mysterious doctrine which is fundamental to every part of the Christian system, and a belief of which is essential to all true godliness.

Baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost does not merely mean that those who are commissioned to administer it have their authority from the persons of the Godhead, nor alone that the Divine name is invoked in the ordinance. The rite administered in this threefold name implies a cordial belief in the covenant-relation of each of the persons of the Godhead. It is the dedication of the subject of baptism to a Triune Godhead, and a profession of entire dependence upon this glorious Being for acceptance, with earnest desire and expectation of the actual and present enjoyment of the blessing.

God the Father is revealed in Scripture as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and as the Head of the covenant of grace, on heaven's part, in the economy of human redemption. He is the God of mercy and peace. "*God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son.*" He appointed the Mediator and gave the redeemed, as first chosen and loved by Him, into the hand of Christ, to be ransomed from the curse. He brought the First-begotten into the world, sustained Him in his arduous undertaking, accepted his vicarious sacrifice, set Him at his own right hand, and conferred upon Him all ascension-gifts to bestow upon the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them. His is eminently the endearing character of Father; and concerning Him, the Saviour said after his resurrection, as if to give his people the sweetest encouragement to approach Him in the paternal relation: "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."¹

¹ John xx. 17.

By being baptized in the name of the Father, we profess our belief in the new and well-ordered covenant, and declare it to be all our salvation and desire. We approach to, and confide in, not an imaginary deity of our own fancy, or the God of nature and Providence merely—but the God of love, the God of all grace. Taking hold of his covenant, we profess to lay aside our enmity, and to embrace and delight in Him as our salvation and portion. First of his gracious proposals in the covenant is the declaration, “I am thy God.” “I will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” In baptism, we joyfully embrace the offer, and from the heart respond, “I am the Lord’s.” “Thou art my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation.”¹ The love, the peace, the whole blessings of the covenant are centred in this Father, who “spared not his own Son, but delivered Him up to the death for us all.” In the baptismal act, we virtually embrace this love, and appropriate this peace and blessing. Dedicating ourselves to the Head of the covenant, and the Father of mercies, we solemnly vow to serve Him, “as a son his father.” Instead of regarding Him as a sin-avenging God, or an incensed Judge, we come to Him as our loving Father, who has yearning bowels of overflowing pity, and who keeps truth and mercy for ever. We engage to be his, and for Him alone—to perform the duties of adopted sons and obedient children. His favour we profess to be to us better than life; and we devote ourselves to Him to please Him in all things—to promote his honour, and to live alone to his glory. Believers by baptism are placed among the children, and they learn to cry from the heart, “My Father, thou art the guide of my youth.” “Thou shalt call me my Father; and shalt not turn away from me.”²

Again, the *name of the Son* is named upon us in baptism. This implies that we receive and embrace the Lord Jesus Christ in all his excellent offices and endearing relations, that we rely upon Him for all blessing, and that we cheerfully and fully surrender ourselves to his service. The Redeemer is “all and in all” in relation to human salvation and happiness. He was set up from everlasting, and is the only sure foundation laid in Zion. God’s proclaimed and unalterable purpose is that “all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.” When the name of Christ is named upon us in baptism, we declare that we accept of the Lord Jesus as our Prophet, Priest, and King: and that we depend upon Him,

¹ Psalm lxxxix. 26.

² Jeremlah lii. 4. 19.

and Him alone, as "the Lord our righteousness," for pardon, acceptance, and complete salvation. Thankfully we accept of Christ as the Father's "unspeakable gift," and welcome in faith the proclamation from the excellent glory, "THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, HEAR HIM." We receive Him as *our Prophet*, and submit our minds to be taught by Him, taking his Word to be a light to our paths, and our unerring directory in all things. Lamenting our ignorance, and refusing to lean upon our own understandings, we rest on the blessed promise to Zion's children: "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children;" and we plead in earnestness, "Show me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation: on thee do I wait all the day."¹ And while we place ourselves under Divine teaching, we engage to search the Divine Word, and to follow its instructions in all things. The baptized are called to embrace Christ Jesus as *the Great High Priest of their profession*; and by the act of dedication, they profess to rely on his atoning sacrifice, to have recourse to his blood for pardon and cleansing, and to depend always on his powerful and all-prevailing intercession. We submit to Him, too, as *our Almighty King*. Our hearts are surrendered to Him, to be subdued to the obedience of faith; and our enemies are put into his hands, to be restrained and destroyed. We profess to recognize his authority in all things, and to make his laws the rule of our life, and our songs in the house of our pilgrimage. We acquiesce in his sovereign appointments, and delight in observing his ordinances, as expressions of his authority, and as appropriate means of blessing. This exalted Saviour we avouch to be our Lord and God. We resolve to glory only in his cross, and to rely on Him alone for all we need, and as the only and sure foundation of all our hopes. His name is a strong tower. He is his people's treasure and all—the Alpha and Omega of all their praise. While we thus embrace Him and cleave to Him with the heart, we joyfully declare of Him, "Surely in the Lord have I righteousness and strength;" and constrained by his love, we learn "to live not to ourselves, but to Him who died for us, and rose again."² Jesus is made of God unto us, "Wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."³ Accepting Him for these ends, we glory only in the Lord; and by our baptism, we become pledged to live as his faithful servants, to walk as obedient children, and to act

¹ Isaiah liv. 13; Ps. xxv. 4, 5. ² Isa. xlv. 24; 2 Cor. v. 15. ³ 1 Cor. i. 30.

befitting the high character of heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ of life everlasting.

The *name of the blessed Spirit* is, finally, named upon us in baptism. We are thus taught to recognize Him as a person in the glorious Godhead, and in the important offices and relations which He sustains in the great affair of human redemption. In the glorious plan of salvation, the Holy Spirit has intrusted to Him the whole application of covenanted and purchased blessings. His office is to take the things which are Christ's, and effectually show them to us. He quickens those that are dead in sin, renews their nature, enlightens their minds, and seals them to the day of redemption. He is the Divine Sanctifier and Comforter. In the hearts of the saved, He takes up his abode, and their bodies and spirits become temples of the Holy Ghost. He is "in them a well of water springing up to life everlasting;" and all comfort, peace, hope, and joy spring from his gracious influence. He is the Spirit of grace and supplication; He helps our manifold infirmities in prayer; and as the Spirit of adoption, by Him, "we cry, Abba, Father." Without this blessed agency, the Word cannot quicken, enlighten, or save, and none can truly call Christ Lord, but by the Spirit. He sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts, and is the *earnest*, now enjoyed, of the heavenly inheritance. When we are baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost, we surrender ourselves to Him in these endearing relations and salutary offices, and we profess dependence upon Him for all his gracious operations. The water sprinkled in baptism is the emblem of the Spirit purging the conscience from dead works; and by the application of the external symbol we are pointed to the all-powerful and effectual baptism of the Holy Ghost, as with fire. Dedicated to the Spirit, we surrender ourselves to his teaching, guidance, and sanctifying and comforting influence. Our profession is to "walk in the Spirit," to manifest the workings of his grace, to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, to honour and to depend on Him for the progressive renewal of our hearts and lives, until He conducts us, perfected in holiness, to the land of uprightness. 'The Third Person of the blessed Godhead perfects the new creation, as his omnific operations completed the old.' In dedicating ourselves to Him, therefore, we joyfully embrace the whole wondrous plan of salvation. We seek to stand complete in Christ, advanced to the stature

¹ See *Owen on the Holy Spirit and his Work*, vol. ii. chap. iv. p. 96; edit. 1826.

of perfect men, and we confide in Him to perfect whatsoever concerns us. Thus, in our baptism, we are solemnly given up to a Triune God—to love, obey, and delight in Him. As chosen, redeemed, and sanctified by the blessed Trinity, we own special obligations and duties to each of the Divine persons, and we engage “to walk worthy of God to all pleasing.”¹ We accept of God the Father, Son, and Spirit as our God and Portion—our Father, Saviour, Sanctifier, and All. While we declare that we are his, we profess to rely on Him alone, as all our confidence and expectation. Believing with the heart, we joyfully profess, “Happy is that people whose God is the Lord.” “We will walk in the name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.” We “will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is our strength and our song; He also is become our salvation.”²

The ordinance, then, in this first view—baptism into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—is to be regarded as an eminent privilege, as involving an obligation to the highest duties, and as holding out all encouragement to their faithful performance. To such as rightly receive it, the designation of the Divine name is a solemn public claiming them to be the Lord’s. It is the visible sign of their separation from the rest of the world, and of their enrolment with the people of God. It significantly points to the grand mystery of godliness, oneness with God in his gracious purposes, works, and character—God dwelling in us, and we in Him. It symbolizes the beginning of a life of holiness and blessedness; and exhibits the distinguishing character which Christians should ever sustain—that of a separate, sanctified, peculiar people, wearing God’s name, and transformed into his moral likeness.

A due consideration of this lofty privilege is fitted to excite and animate to all holy duties. Baptism impressively teaches to its subjects the grand practical truth, “Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your bodies and spirits, which are his.” They bear the Divine name, and have received the sign of God’s covenant in their flesh. They are thus bound to walk worthy of God, who has called them to his kingdom and glory. In all things, they should aim to promote the Divine honour, to display the mind of Christ, and to show forth his praises who has called them out of darkness into his marvellous light.

The “exceeding precious” promise appended to the apostolic commission may be taken as an assurance of the

¹ Col. i. 10.

² Ps. cxliv. 15; Micah iv. 5; Isa. xii. 2.

highest favour and blessing, in connection with the right administration of baptism, "LO, I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN TO THE END OF THE WORLD." The Saviour does not only guarantee to his servants in preaching the Gospel, and in discipling all nations, safety, protection, and a blessing in all their work, and perils, and conflicts—He assures them also of his gracious presence in baptizing into discipleship in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. With ministers who dispense the ordinance faithfully, He is present, rendering it effectual as a means of blessing, accepting the surrender and dedication which are made to Him, and baptizing with the Holy Ghost as with fire. The same gracious promise is extended to Christian parents; and they have reason to expect the Redeemer's special presence when they come, in a believing manner, to devote their offspring to God. His Spirit's grace will help them to take hold of God's covenant, and his presence with them always will enable them to remember their solemn engagement, to discharge faithfully all parental duties, and to desire earnestly, and to anticipate humbly and joyfully, the blessed recompense of the reward. And the young who have partaken of Christian baptism have, in virtue of their early dedication, the warrant to plead as Moses, "If thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence;" and are encouraged to rest upon the all-comprehensive promise given to the youthful patriarch, "In all places where thou goest, I will be with thee; and I will not leave thee, till I have done that which I have spoken to thee of."¹

¹ Genesis xxviii. 15.

CHAPTER III.

SPECIAL ENDS OF CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

IN coming to any ordinance of Divine appointment, it is requisite that the worshipper should have distinct and worthy ends in view; and especially in the observance of the sacraments is this necessary to preserve from gross abuse, and to realize the spiritual benefits which these sacred rites are designed to confer. There is reason to fear that the ordinance of baptism is degraded in our day, by multitudes who have recourse to it entertaining erroneous sentiments concerning its nature and design, and proposing to themselves unworthy ends, in attending upon its administration.

- Without adverting to fundamental errors on the subject, which may afterwards be noticed, we may mention two or three low ends which are very commonly proposed by persons even within the pale of the Church, who seek baptism for their children, which indicate a deplorable degree of ignorance on the whole subject, and discover the prevailing ungodliness of many who make a Christian profession. *First*, Many parents seek baptism for their children, merely in compliance with an established custom, *to keep up the credit for themselves or their families that they are Christians.* Living without having made any proper profession of the Gospel, ignorant of its distinctive doctrines, and neglectful of its plainest duties, they yet cherish the fatal delusion that the Christian name alone is sufficient to make them Christians, and think themselves sure of the Divine favour, and safe for eternity, without possessing a particle of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. Such persons, however, under the strong power of self-delusion, are exceedingly tenacious of the mere name of Christian, and would be greatly offended, if either it was denied them, or if it was hinted that with it, after all, they may be none of Christ's. These deluded creatures appear quite anxious to obtain baptism for their children, and would be very indignant if it were refused them.

The Popish error that it is by baptism we become Christians, irrespective of any moral change, and the employment in its administration of oil as well as water, have led to the use of the term *christen*, instead of baptize, indicating a marked departure from the Divine institution. The persons to whom we refer very generally employ this phraseology, and speak of the *christening* of their children as by no means to be omitted; and congratulate themselves on obtaining for them all that is desirable, if they are admitted to the ordinance. Few things are more fearful than such self-deception. The end proposed is to help forward and seal a delusion, which is most fatal equally to parents and their children. Ministers of religion who lend themselves to foster such perverted views are deeply criminal; and those sections of the Church in which they are entertained, or which are not at pains to instruct parents aright in this matter, have resting on them a fearful responsibility, and cannot fail to suffer the sad consequences, from the ignorance and irreligion which will in time overspread their membership.

Some, again, regard baptism as *a mere ceremony for giving a name to the child baptized*. Under the Jewish economy, it was customary to declare the name of the child at the time when it was circumcised. Hence it is usual to pronounce the Christian name of a child, or of an adult convert, at baptism. But when such a low and unworthy view is entertained, that baptism is only intended for conferring a name, the practice of declaring the name should either altogether be dispensed with, or so changed as to afford no countenance to the vain fancies of ignorance or superstition. Scarcely anything can be conceived more dishonouring to God, or deadening to the conscience, than to degrade a holy ordinance, by observing it with an end so irrational and unworthy.

There are others—and it is to be feared that, even in Protestant churches, the number is not few—who regard baptism as a kind of charm that protects infants from evil influences, and that is especially needed to secure their safety when dying. They have only confused, incoherent notions on the subject, and they have never been at pains to inquire what is the testimony of the Scriptures in relation to the ends of baptism, or to form right sentiments respecting it. Among such persons, if the child is sickly, or apparently in danger of death, there is the utmost anxiety to obtain baptism; and if it dies unbaptized, their distress will rise into agony. On the other hand, they will avow, without hesitation, that their children are certainly happy if they have obtained baptism previously to death.

Against cherishing ends so low and unsuitable, all should be warned and guarded ; while all pains should be taken to impart clear and full scriptural instructions on this article. Christian parents should be familiar with the high ends which the ordinance presents, both as they regard themselves and their children. Besides the ends which the sacraments have in common, we may notice, as among the *special* ends of baptism, the following :—

1. *Baptism is a visible mark appointed by God, by which the Church is distinguished and separated from all nations.* In instituting this ordinance, the Redeemer contemplated the universality of his holy religion. All nations were to be disciplined—the Gospel was to be preached to every creature. But the Church in all ages was to consist of persons redeemed out of the world. Its individual members were to come out and be separate, to relinquish the society and friendships of the world, and to be ever distinguished for nonconformity to its customs, spirit, and pursuits. The honour, privilege, and safety of the true members of the Church lie here. They are a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people. The words of the dying lawgiver declare this distinction and privilege: “Israel then shall dwell in safety alone : the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine ; also his heavens shall drop down dew.”¹ The visible mark of this separation is baptism, and this was a chief end designed by its glorious Author in its institution. Those who were to be called out of the nations were to receive this mark of discipleship in all lands where the Gospel should be preached, and that to the end of time. Accordingly, in the days of primitive Christianity, the outward sign was always applied to those who received the faith of Christ, and who thus openly declared their renunciation of their former connections. It was not less the badge of their profession of a new Master and a new relation, than a declaration, by means of a sensible sign and a palpable action, that they had fully abandoned the world, and its evil customs and pursuits. On the memorable day of Pentecost, the multitude of converts were at once baptized. Afterwards, as the kingdom of Christ extended, and believers were added to the Church—converted Jews and Gentiles—they received, by baptism, the impressed seal that marked their forsaking of former courses, and their rejection of all that had hitherto constituted the ground of their trust and dependence. The Ethiopian eunuch

¹ Deuteronomy xxxiii. 28.

was baptized, Cornelius and his family, and the jailer and his house. Thus was it distinctly and loudly proclaimed, that they had wholly parted from the Judaical ritual, and from Gentile idolatry, and that they had willingly gone without the camp to Jesus, bearing his reproach. This is still the primary design of Christian baptism. If we are Christ's, and to be in his company on Mount Zion, we must wear the mark of those who are "redeemed from the earth," and who "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goes." Vital Christianity is intimately connected with maintaining a holy separation from the world. And not only is it the Redeemer's design, by giving them the ordinance of baptism, to obsignate their separation, his people must willingly profess it. Parents should propose, as a principal end of the baptism of their children, their incorporation with those that are redeemed from the earth; and our baptism should ever remind us of our solemn pledge and sacred vow to live as not of the world, to overcome it by faith, and to seek a better country, even an heavenly.

2. *Another end of baptism is introduction to the visible Church, and participation in its fellowship.* In the Westminster Confession, it is declared that baptism is "a sacrament of the New Testament, for the solemn admission of the person baptized into the visible Church." This view of the ordinance accords with the uniform testimony of Sacred Scripture. Baptism does not *make* children members of the visible Church, but only recognizes, in a solemn and public manner, their membership. The infants of believing parents are born within the covenant, and they ought to be regarded as members of, and entitled to the privileges of, the visible Church. In the initiatory rite, they are openly enrolled in the fellowship of the Church; their right of admission is acknowledged, and they are received to all the Church's privileges.¹ To Christian parents and their children this end is most valuable. To the visible Church pertain the covenant and its promises; the means of grace, purchased benefits, and special providential protection and blessing. All who are within the Church may not come to enjoy eternal salvation, but to all it is freely offered; and even those who shall not be finally saved, inherit many distinguishing favours, through their connection with the visible redeemed society. By admission to this fellowship, they share in the dispensation of the Word and ordinances—the appointed means of life and salvation. They have an interest in the prayers, counsels, and

¹ See *Boston's Complete Body of Divinity*, vol. iii. p. 307.

sympathies of God's people; and the eyes of Divine care, and the arms of Almighty power, are over and around a people separated from the world, to be the heritage of the Lord and his pleasant plant.

As Noah's ark, prepared for the salvation of his house, and an apposite emblem of the Church, enclosed the only true worshippers of God that were then in the world, and afforded safety from the deluge to all the patriarch's family; so by baptism, visibly connecting us with the Lord's people, we enjoy many important privileges. "The like figure whereunto baptism does also now save us . . . by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." ¹ The baptized receive the seal of fellowship with the highest incorporated society in the world. All of them enjoy the doctrine of God's Word, have the light of Divine revelation, and profess faith in Christ; and some of them are, in the amplest sense, the excellent of the earth—heirs of salvation, and kings and priests to God and the Lamb. From this chosen society, prayers are ascending continually into God's temple, and by them sacrifices of praise are daily laid upon God's altar. Their holy works are acknowledged of God, and are blessed for the advancement of his glory in the earth. The eyes of the Lord are upon his Church perpetually, and her walls are continually before Him. Angels, the invisible guard of the covenant, encamp around her; and all providences bright and dark are made subservient to her purification, prosperity, and ultimate salvation. Here souls are born to Christ, and saints are nourished and prepared for glory. "And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her: and the Highest himself shall establish her." ² "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." ³

To such fellowship, and to the privileges consequent upon it, baptism is the appointed means of introduction. Christian parents have thus a very high motive to seek it for their children, and baptized youth have ground to remember their baptism with interest and delight. The baptized are, by the washing of water, enrolled in the brotherhood of faith. They are publicly recommended to the prayers of God's people, and placed under the tutelage of the Church as their spiritual mother. While they are pledged to the offices of holy fellowship, they have a warrant to lay claim to all the privileges of

¹ 1 Peter iii. 21.

² Psalm lxxxvii. 5.

³ 1 Corinthians xii. 13.

the house of God. As to the Israelitish people placed under the covenant of circumcision, so to them are committed the lively oracles of God; and to them pertain the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises.¹ Rejoicing in the heritage of God's people, a subject of Christian baptism may say, "The lines have fallen to me in a pleasant place; yea, the inheritance I have got excels in beauty."

3. Baptism is a striking exhibition of the Divine method of cleansing the soul, and renewing the whole man by the blood of Christ, and by the work of the Holy Ghost. We shall have occasion to speak of these great truths afterwards, under the head of the *doctrines* inculcated by baptism. But we notice them now, as one of the principal ends of the institution and observance of the ordinance. The Lord's Supper was appointed to be a standing memorial of Christ's death; and a chief end of its devout observance is to perpetuate the lively remembrance of the Redeemer's atoning sacrifice till his second coming. Baptism, like circumcision, which it supplanted, denotes the putting away of the sins of the flesh, and exhibits, in a lively manner, the grand and only way of moral purification. The ordained outward element is exclusively water—the medium of cleansing, and a means of refreshment and fertility. For the purpose of exhibiting impressively the pollution of our nature, and the absolute need of moral purification to all who are born of Adam, children are brought to a rite which loudly declares their defiled condition, and points to the only way in which they can be restored to the lost image of God, and renewed in the spirit of holiness. There would be no meaning in the application of water to the subjects of baptism, if they were not regarded as sinful and defiled; and while its use in the ordinance strikingly proclaims that children are not innocent—that none who are admitted to baptism are without sin—it forcibly declares, too, the grand method which God has provided for cleansing the heart and conscience, and bringing depraved human beings to shine forth in the beauty of holiness.²

¹ Romans iii. 4; ix. 4.

² Socinians and Arians are in the habit of teaching, that children are born into the world entirely spotless. Their favourite illustration is, that the minds of infant children are like a sheet of white paper. It need not be told that such a view is utterly opposed to the plain and reiterated testimony of Scripture on the subject, which declares human beings to be conceived in sin, and born in iniquity, and represents it as impossible for man that is born of woman to be clean. While this sentiment subverts the Gospel,

Water is the appropriate scriptural emblem of the Holy Spirit, and his powerful grace is frequently and beautifully compared to the salutary influence of this element. "I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, my blessing upon thine offspring." "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon them, and they shall be clean: from all their filthiness, and from all their idols will I cleanse them."¹ "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." "And this," says the evangelist, spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified."² Water is likewise an emblem of the blood of Christ—the grand means of moral purification—as the Spirit is the blessed agent of sanctification. These two are inseparably connected in the spiritual renewal and purification of the heirs of salvation. "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses from all sin." This precious blood was shed that thereby the Redeemer might sanctify his Church, and present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.³ It is applied for purification by the Holy Spirit; and in his hands it becomes "the blood of sprinkling."⁴ "We are saved by the washing of regeneration, and the renewal of the Holy Ghost."⁵ Of all the redeemed who come to glory it is declared, without

it is equally opposed to sound reason and true philosophy. Unitarians try to vindicate their system by alleging in its favour the well-known doctrine which Locke has incontrovertibly established, that *the mind has no innate ideas*. But though this is freely admitted, it is undeniable that the mind has innate, natural propensities; and if these are not evil—if there is no previous bias and original taint, how does it happen that, of the millions of human beings that are born into the world, all, without exception, discover the disposition to follow evil example—all are ignorant of God, and inclined to wickedness? A constant and universal imitation of evil proves an original bias—a universal taint of moral depravity. The Arminian view of original sin, which denies the federal headship of Adam, and the imputation of his primeval offence to his posterity, and which does not admit the total and helpless depravity of the nature, is at once opposed to the statements of the Word—especially to the apostle's cogent reasoning in Romans, fifth chapter—contradicts the experience of convinced sinners, and is injurious to the glorious remedy provided in the Gospel.

¹ Isa. xlv. 3; Ezek. xxxvi. 25. ² John vii. 37-39. ³ Ephes. v. 27.

⁴ The mixing of the blood of the ancient sacrifices with water previously to its being sprinkled, was not only to preserve it liquid, but had also a plain allusion to the Spirit as connected with the application of the blood for purification.

⁵ Titus iii. 5.

exception, "They have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."¹ The grand medium of purification was the blood of Christ; the blessed agent that effectually applied it was the Holy Spirit; saved sinners themselves were active in sanctification; "they wash their robes," and are co-workers with God in their renewal after the image of holiness. The necessity of this renewal is impressively declared in the significant rite of baptism, and the method divinely ordained by which it is effected is strikingly foreshadowed.

4. Baptism *exhibits the unity of the Church, and the baptized are publicly presented in the ordinance to enjoy the benefits of this fellowship.* There is one body, one faith, one baptism. However widely dispersed, however different in forms of outward profession, administration, and other circumstances, the Church of God is essentially one in all lands and in all ages of the world. There is one glorious living Head; one system of revealed truth—the faith once delivered to the saints, to be believed and professed; a common salvation to be enjoyed; and one blessed animating hope, of which all faithful members are partakers. "We being many are one bread and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread."² A Christian father beautifully expresses this unity, "The Church is *one*, which, by its fruitful increase, is enlarged into a multitude. As the rays of the sun, though many, are yet one luminary; as the branches of a tree, though numerous, are all established on one firmly-rooted trunk; and as many streams springing from the same fountain, though apparently dispersed abroad by their overflowing abundance, yet have their unity preserved by one common origin—so the Church, though it extends its rays through the world, is one light. Though everywhere diffused, its unity is not broken. By the abundance of its increase, it extends its branches through the whole earth. It spreads far and wide its flowing streams; yet it has one Head, one fountain, one Parent, and is enriched and enlarged by the issue of its own fruitfulness."³

The visible Church under the Old Testament, the charter of which was God's covenant with Abraham, is likened by the Apostle Paul to a stately, wide-spreading olive tree.⁴ The race of Israel, incorporated in the Church, were the natural branches; converted Gentiles are the branches grafted in; and when

¹ Rev. vii. 14.

² 1 Cor. x. 17.

³ Cyprian, *De Unitate Ecclesie*, sect. iv.

⁴ Romans xi.

Israel shall turn to the Lord, the natural branches shall be again restored; and the one goodly olive tree, verdant and beautiful, shall overspread all lands, and shall embrace, under its shadow, the people of all nations. Circumcision of old was the symbol of connection with this exalted society. It is true, it was but a sign, for they were not all Israel who were of Israel; but still it was an expressive and significant exhibition of the joyful truth, that the Church of the first-born is one holy fraternity, separated from the world, one mystical body, united to the same living and glorious Head. Baptism teaches the same fundamental truth; and participation in the rite is intended to proclaim this unity, as well as to present the privileges which result from it, to the subjects of baptism. Denominational differences, and diversity of forms, do not destroy this unity. Those who profess the true religion, with their children, however separated by place, or name, or outward form, are to be regarded as equally belonging to the one blessed society—the Church of Christ, Presbyterian, Episcopalian, Independent—who hold Christ the Head, who profess the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, and exemplify their profession by a holy life, are members of this visible community, and partakers of its spiritual privileges and external blessings. The one baptism in the name of a Triune God introduces the baptized to this fellowship, and is a public confirmation of that important article of the Church's creed, "I BELIEVE IN THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH." It is unscriptural and monstrous to limit the Church only to one particular section, and to maintain that connection with the Church of Christ is the exclusive privilege of those who receive baptism from a favoured order of administrators, or of such as submit to a peculiar mode of administration.¹

¹ The sentiment expressed above is not designed to maintain the validity of baptism as administered by the Romish priesthood. Though the leading reformers taught that the *matter* of the sacrament exists where the words of institution are employed; and though the Reformed Churches have, generally, in practice, admitted the validity of such an administration, at least so far as not to require the ordinance to be dispensed anew, we think there are strong grounds to plead that baptism from the hands of those who are identified with antichrist, should be regarded as invalid. The pretence of Puseyites that baptism is only valid when administered by a minister episcopally ordained, would unchristianize at once a vast majority of the Protestant community, and is unscriptural as it is intolerant and uncharitable. The Baptist tenet, that there is no right baptism but by immersion, is justly liable to a similar charge. The sentiment inculcated in the text is in marked contrast to such illiberal views, and is the doctrine taught in the various symbols of the Reformed Churches, and by all the eminent leading reformers.

Of the benefits of fellowship with this one Church, *two* are of special interest to those who are the subjects of baptism. They are recommended to the prayers of the faithful ; and the officers and members of the Church become pledged for their spiritual training and scriptural instruction. These benefits shall be considered afterwards ; but, meanwhile, their manifold advantages as ends in baptism cannot be over-estimated. Children are in baptism publicly recommended to the prayers of God's people, and a solemn guarantee is given that they shall be educated for God and for heaven. What a blessed privilege for Christian parents ! What an eminent advantage, or rather, what a well-spring of benefits, to the children of Zion ! They are thus brought to the altar of God, placed under the shelter of the mercy-seat, and blessings are sought on their behalf by those who have an interest at the throne of grace. They are entered in Christ's school ; and a guarantee is publicly given that they shall be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

5. This ordinance, furthermore, *is a testimony of our duty to God, and obliges us to the knowledge, worship, and service of Him into whose name we are baptized.*

The name of God impressed in baptism declares us to be his professed and pledged servants. It was customary, in ancient times, for soldiers to have the name of their general enstamped on their right hands, to testify that they were absolutely under his authority, bound to fight under his standard, to be concerned for his honour, and in all things to obey his commands. Idolaters, too, had the mark or symbol of their gods impressed on their foreheads or hands. In allusion to this practice, the adherents of antichrist are said to have his mark in their foreheads and on their right hands ;¹ and, on the other hand, the redeemed,—the approved servants of Christ,—are declared to have the Father's name written in their foreheads.² The Israelites, when they passed through the Red Sea, and followed their glorious leader through the wilderness, are said to have been "baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea."³ This means that they were solemnly engaged to observe the institutions of Moses, of which their extraordinary baptism by the spray of the sea, and by the moisture that distilled on them from the cloudy pillar, was a visible seal and pledge. In like manner, Christian baptism publicly proclaims its subjects to be God's servants. It

¹ Revelation xiii. 16.

² Revelation xxi. 4.

³ 1 Corinthians x. 2.

separates and distinguishes them from others; it marks them as the Lord's. Ratifying the great truths which inculcate the knowledge of his character and works, and itself a distinguishing part of Divine worship, it engages the baptized to walk worthy of God, who has called them to his kingdom and glory. There is a community in the world that is eminently designated "the people of God;" distinguished by peculiar privileges, and appointed to special holy service. Every privilege which they enjoy lays them under obligation to a corresponding duty. The covenant, which is the charter of all blessing, as they take hold of it, becomes to them an engagement to duty. The truth which they profess is to be exemplified in all holy living. And the seals of their discipleship—baptism and the Lord's Supper—are an open testimony to all men, as well as a public engagement that they are not their own, but that they are servants of a glorious Master, bound to honour Him by a course of uniform and devoted obedience. Baptism is thus an important means of engaging to decision in religion, and may ever afterwards be suitably improved to excite to activity and diligence in God's service. When duly considered, it is calculated to minister support and spiritual consolation in the duties and trials of life. Justly may the baptized say, My highest privilege and early dedication called and engaged me to be the Lord's. His name was named upon me, and I was enlisted in his service. I wear in my sealed profession the mark of a glorious Master, a mark which I have no desire to conceal, and which, I trust, no power of hell or earth shall prevail to efface. Whatever others do, be it mine to serve the Lord. His service is perfect freedom. Whatever difficulties I may have to encounter, however weak and unworthy I am, He whose I am, and whom I serve, can and will sustain me in the work to which He has called me. I rely on his all-sufficient grace. I desire to be wholly his; to serve Him in newness of life, and to walk before Him in all holy obedience. "Lord, I am thine; O save me." I rest on his blessed assurance, as my exceeding great reward—"Where I am, there shall my servant be."

Lastly. *Baptism has for its special ends the participation of the grace of salvation, and the enjoyment of glory.* The ordinances of our holy religion are not merely to be regarded as appointments to be observed from a sense of duty, irrespective of any spiritual benefit which they are the means of conferring. They are not empty signs, or visible badges

only of a profession. They are not improperly termed "means of grace," as they are ordained channels for conveying the blessing, and appointed means for making us partakers of the grace of the covenant. The blessings of salvation are sometimes communicated through reading and hearing the Word. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God." The praises and prayers of the sanctuary not only affect the heart and elevate the mind,—they are accepted as acts of religious worship, and in answer to them, spiritual and eternal blessings descend from the throne. The Redeemer's gracious presence is guaranteed to a few meeting in his name; and the Holy Spirit is promised to be given, and is actually conferred on them that devoutly seek his influence. The ordinances which are designated *sealing* are an eminent means of blessing. Observed, it is true, they may be, and yet no real grace be exercised, and no spiritual benefit be enjoyed, either at the time or afterwards. No mere external services can of themselves infuse right moral feelings or spiritual habits. "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth anything, but a new creature." Yet we have reason to look for the blessing in connection with the dispensation of holy ordinances. God has promised to make his people joyful in his house of prayer, and there to accept of their sacrifices and burnt offerings.¹

Is any time more suitable for expecting the blessing, than when we draw nigh to Him who dwells in Zion, who hears prayer, and who waits to be gracious? We deny not, that in the dispensation of the covenant of peace, the stream of mercy and love may run, for a considerable time, underground; and that saving benefits may result to individuals from participating in holy ordinances, a length of time after they have had access to them. But still, considering the connection of these institutions with the covenant of grace, and the design of their appointment, there is strong reason to regard them as, in many cases, the prescribed way of conferring spiritual blessings, which are actually enjoyed in their administration. That this is the doctrine of the Reformed Churches, their public confessions amply testify. In the Westminster Confession, it is declared "that baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church, but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his engrafting

¹ Isaiah lvi. 7.

into Christ, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life.”¹ And again; “The efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered; yet notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God’s own will, in his appointed time.” Similar is the statement of the Church of England in one of her articles—“Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not christened; but it is also a sign of regeneration or new birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive baptism rightly are grafted into the Church; the promises of forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost are visibly signed and sealed, faith is confirmed, and grace increased, by virtue of prayer unto God.”²

From these declarations—and such are the uniform testimonies of all the Reformed Churches—it is evident that children are “fit and capable subjects of Divine grace, and that they are included in the covenant of redemption.” They may have “the *principle* implanted in infancy, while yet they are incapable of its exercise.”³ The ordinance of baptism regards children as having a prior interest in the covenant; and therefore to them is administered the sacred rite, which is a sign and seal of their union to Christ, of the remission of sin, and of their engagement to be the Lord’s. Does not this warrant the expectation that, at the time of baptism, in some cases, children may become the actual recipients of grace; and that, in others, grace may be afterwards imparted, flowing from the ordinance as remote streams from a refreshing fountain, or as healing waters issuing from a well of salvation? The Scripture expressions on the subject obviously presuppose, in many instances, an intimate connection between the outward rite, and the spiritual blessings which it represents or is designed to convey. “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Christ were baptized into his death?”⁴ “By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one

¹ *Westminster Confession*, chap. xxviii. sect. 1.

² *Articles of the Church of England*, art. xxvii.

³ See Dr Owen’s *Works*, vol. ii. pp. 482, 492.

⁴ Romans vi. 3.

Spirit.”¹ “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”²

Instead therefore of regarding baptism as a naked sign, or an empty form, it is to be looked upon as “a true sacrament, and a real channel of grace.” The grace offered, as expressed in the passages of Holy Writ which we have quoted, comprehends the prime blessings of salvation. Flowing from the sovereign favour of God, they include a state of reconciliation and friendship with God, peace with heaven, renewal after the Divine image, the implantation of holiness, and the hope of eternal felicity. We have ground at least to plead for these blessings, and to hope that they may be conferred in baptism, or that they may afterwards be enjoyed as the fruit of early dedication to God. Grace and glory are inseparably connected; and the grand promise made to believing parents, “I will be a God to thee, and to thy seed after thee,” originally given in connection with the institution of circumcision, and still appended to the initiatory ordinance of the new economy, includes all saving blessings for time and eternity. We present children to the God of the covenant, that He may bless them. Encouraged by the gracious command of Him who is King in Zion, and who instituted the ordinance, “Suffer the little children to come unto me,” we bring them to Him for the blessing. While, in his own appointed institution, parents take hold of the covenant, in an act of solemn dedication of themselves and their offspring to God, and while others are praying in their behalf, may they not expect the blessing that descends as the dew on the hill of Zion, even life that shall never end?

Such are the important ends of baptism. The subjects of it are thus visibly marked, as distinguished and separated from the rest of the world; they are introduced to the visible Church and a participation in the fellowship; there is a clear exhibition made of the Divine method of cleansing the soul, and of the renewal of the whole man by the blood of Christ, and the agency of the Holy Ghost; the unity of the Church is strikingly displayed, and the baptized are called to enjoy the benefits of its fellowship, in the prayers of the faithful offered on their behalf, and in the solemn pledges given for their religious training. They give, besides, in their baptism, a public testimony of their obligation to all holy obedience; and a chief end to them of the institution is the

¹ 1 Corinthians xii. 13.

² Acts ii. 38.

enjoyment of the grace of salvation, and of eternal glory. To subserve these high purposes has this important ordinance been instituted. These should be the great ends proposed in its observance; and there cannot be a doubt that to many who come, as the redeemed of the Lord to heaven, having the Father's name inscribed on their foreheads, all those ends have been realized, as the pleasant and precious fruit of their baptismal dedication.

CHAPTER III.

THE DOCTRINES EXHIBITED IN BAPTISM.

THE sacraments of the Church are impressive means of spiritual instruction ; and when rightly understood and applied, they exhibit the grand fundamental truths of Christianity in a manner at once edifying and affecting. The mode of communicating the knowledge of Divine things by these sacred rites is that of visible representation or external symbol ; and this may be regarded as the *natural* method of teaching, as distinguished from instruction by *oral* language, which is the *artificial*. Not by one sense alone, but by several, is important truth conveyed to the mind ; and when we consider that the sacraments are established by Divine appointment, and that their teaching is superadded to that of the Inspired Word, we can easily perceive that they are admirably adapted to be a powerful and standing testimony to truths which are of infinite moment for us to know ; and that they are fitted to impress these truths in the most powerful manner on the heart and conscience of those to whom they are addressed. The external symbols themselves represent spiritual objects, and their use and application either plainly declare many of the great doctrines of our holy religion, or clearly imply their reception and belief. By significant signs addressed to the different senses, Divine things are brought very near, their reality is felt, and their value and importance are taught, so as to leave an indelible impression. To the sight, as well as to the ear, Divine mysteries are exhibited ; and by the sight and touch, and even by the sense of taste, the eternal verities of the Christian faith are symbolically apprehended. Such a mode of imparting spiritual instruction displays remarkable Divine condescension, and is singularly adapted to our present state, as conversant chiefly with objects of sense, and as having imperfect apprehensions of things spiritual and heavenly. In the sacraments, God speaks

at once to the external ear, and eye, and to the organs of taste and touch ; and that his instructions may be felt in all their importance, and may make a permanent impression on the memory and heart and conscience, He addresses all the faculties of the soul. Before those who participate in these holy ordinances, "Christ Jesus is set forth, evidently crucified among them ;" and sincere worshippers can say, as the result of enjoying them, concerning Christ and his salvation, "That which we have seen and heard, which our ears have heard, which our eyes have seen, which we have looked upon, which our hands have handled of the Word of life."¹

Viewing the ordinance of baptism as a "compendious Gospel," as Augustine has expressly designated both sacraments, we notice some of the great doctrines which it clearly exhibits and impressively teaches.

1. Baptism strikingly declares the cardinal doctrine of revealed religion—THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY. Every baptized member of the Church is, by a divinely prescribed form, designated after the name of a Triune God. The words, if they have any meaning, imply a distinct act of solemn worship addressed to each of the glorious persons named, and express consecration to his service. It were evidently most blasphemous and idolatrous to regard one of these names as that of supreme Godhead ; and the others—the one of a creature however exalted, and the other of a Divine attribute. Instead of the scriptural names, let the terms by which Unitarians expound them be substituted in the baptismal formula, and the revolting absurdity and blasphemy of the sentiment will be at once apparent. The Christian faith, however, is built on too solid a foundation to be shaken by the shallow sophistries or daring perversions of those who exalt proud human reason to be the judge of revelation, and who deny the only Lord God and our Saviour. In baptism, the Church solemnly and publicly confesses her Lord ; and every individual who is admitted to her fellowship, bears upon him the blessed name of a 'Three-One God. This is the grand article of a Christian profession, the fundamental truth with which is inseparably connected, and from which flows the whole system of revealed religion. No provision could possibly be made more suitable for proclaiming the doctrine of the Trinity ; and while the Church lasts, till the end of time, and in all lands, those who bear the Christian name are constituted perpetual witnesses for the scriptural character of the glorious object of worship—

¹ 1 John i. 1.

one in essence, three in person—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. How important it is to have right views of the Author of revelation, the exalted Being whom we adore, and from whom we expect all blessing! And how admirably is instruction on this fundamental article communicated in the initiatory rite of the Christian profession! Baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, when our Christianity is first publicly declared, we can never deny the doctrine of the Trinity, or refuse Divine homage to the Saviour or the Spirit, without renouncing our Christianity, or substituting a cold and cheerless theism for the life-inspiring and transforming system of revelation.

2. THE COVENANT OF REDEMPTION is not obscurely exhibited by baptism. Even the fundamental doctrine of the Trinity could supply to guilty and defiled creatures no comfort, and could inspire them with no joyful hope, were not God revealed in his covenant-character, providing salvation for lost sinners, and securing, with infallible certainty, the enjoyment of its blessings. Of this covenant the appointed seal is baptism. Like circumcision, under the ancient economy, it confirms to believers, the heirs of salvation, the grand promise, "*I will be a God to thee, and thy seed after thee.*" It is a "sign and seal of the righteousness of faith"—the *condition* of the covenant. The external element employed is an emblem of the precious blood which ratifies the covenant; and our duty and privilege in baptism are to "behold the blood of the covenant, which God has ordained," as the only medium of obtaining all spiritual and eternal blessings. Nothing is of higher importance for us to know aright than the doctrine of the covenant of grace. This compact of mercy is the origin of human salvation, and from it flows all blessings that can be enjoyed by the sons of men. It is the "Lamb's book of life," in which are inscribed the names of all the saved, and none are admitted to glory who are not found written therein. God has promised to show to the fearers of his name his covenant. With peculiar impressiveness is this done in the ordinance of baptism. It is the visible seal on God's part affixed to them who are regarded as the seed of the covenant—the seed of promise. It confirms to them the love and mercy, the grace and truth of Him who, sustaining a covenant relation to his people, declares, "I am your God;" and it claims them as his by free sovereign choice, as well as by the most wondrous purchase. In baptism, believers "take hold" of

' Exodus xxiv. 8.

God's covenant, and they are assured of a name and a place within his walls, better than that of a son or a daughter.¹ In connection with a due consideration of their baptismal dedication, they may, through the Spirit, be assured of their interest in God's eternal love, and his gracious designs of mercy. By "two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie"—the word and oath of Jehovah in covenant—"they may obtain strong consolation."²

3. The doctrine of *human depravity* is likewise taught in the ordinance of baptism. The element of water is the means of cleansing from outward pollution; the blood of Christ, which it represents, can alone cleanse from moral defilement; and the application of the material symbol in baptism denotes the purification of the nature from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. When the subjects of baptism are infants, the great fact of original and total depravity is exhibited in the strongest light. In themselves weak and helpless, and incapable of the commission of actual transgression, they are yet brought to an ordinance which loudly proclaims that man that is born of woman cannot be clean; and that, as indispensable to the enjoyment of all holy privilege, the soul must be purified, and inherent defilement must be purged away. In various other ways, the cardinal doctrine of man's original depravity is proclaimed, as well by the history of human character, and the administration of the Divine government, as by the explicit declarations of revelation. The original bias to evil is early developed in the human being. The moral taint of the fallen nature discovers itself in the whole man, and in his every future disposition and action. Infants suffer pain from their tenderest years; many of them die in infancy, and some are cut off by Divine judgments inflicted on guilty communities. These visitations loudly proclaim that infants are guilty and depraved, and that the whole human race is dealt with as a collection of condemned criminals. Under a righteous moral government, an innocent being cannot suffer; and the pain and death of infants declare that all have sinned—even those who are incapable of actual transgression—and that the proper demerit of sin of every kind is death. The same solemn truth is declared in the ordinance of baptism. The affusion of water rendered by Divine prescription, essential to the sacrament of initiation, and placed at the door of admission to the fellowship of the Church, proclaims that none are free from moral depravity.

¹ Isaiah lvi. 5.

² Hebrews vi. 18.

The application of water to the person is a declaration of the Author of the institution : " If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me." At the threshold of the Church, it declares to all who would enter in, " Holiness becomes God's house for ever ;" and " without holiness no man"—no human being, whether infant or adult—" shall see the Lord." All, without a single exception, need cleansing, by a means and agency which they themselves could never provide ; even before, by voluntary acts, they become transgressors of the Divine law. Every baptized individual, in baptism, openly confesses, " I was shapen in sin, and in iniquity did my mother conceive me." And the sacred rite powerfully teaches, at the same time, that, if saved at all, it must be " by the washing of regeneration, and the renewal of the Holy Ghost." An early Christian father thus speaks of the baptism of infants as indicating their original defilement : " Let it be considered what is the reason that whereas the baptism of the Church is given for the forgiveness of sins, infants also are, by the usage of the Church, baptized, when, if there were nothing in infants that wanted forgiveness and mercy, the grace of baptism would be needless to them."¹

4. Another important doctrine declared by baptism is the *propitiation* made for sin through Christ's blood, *and the remission of sin which it has procured.*

By baptism we publicly and joyfully declare, " We have redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of sins." As the application of water implies that the subject is defiled and needs cleansing, so it explicitly points to a divinely-appointed method of purification. This has been graciously provided through the sufferings and death of the Mediator. The irrevocable decree of Heaven is, that " without shedding of blood there is no remission." Provision ample and sufficient for the removal of human guilt, and for the purification of the soul, has been made in the finished atonement. " Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it ; that He might sanctify it by the washing of water." He is the " propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world."² The ransom is complete in the death of Christ—the atonement is perfect ; " He hath put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." These glorious and joy-inspiring truths are loudly proclaimed, and impressively taught in the ordinance of baptism. A crucified Saviour is presented as the

¹ Origen, *Homily on Leviticus* xii.

² Ephesians v. 25, 26 ; 1 John ii. 2.

Author of eternal salvation. As the ark was salvation to Noah and his family from the waters of the deluge, "the like figure, baptism, doth also now save us," by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The sacrifice of Christ is at once the most affecting and wondrous display of the love of God to sinners, and the accepted and all-sufficient ground of pardon, and sanctification, and peace. By the application of Christ's blood, we are completely justified—sin is blotted out fully and for ever. Being in Christ, there is for us no condemnation; and if justified, we shall be also glorified. Baptism is designed to have an intimate connection with the doctrine of the remission of sin through the death of Christ, and with the precious hope which the atonement originates. In the apostle's sermon on the day of Pentecost, the multitude were exhorted: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins."¹ Similar is the command of Ananias to Saul on his conversion, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."² It need scarcely be remarked that external washing of itself can have no influence in effecting the pardon of guilt, or the removal of moral defilement. But, like as the uncleanness of the flesh is taken away by water, so the pollution of the soul is removed by Divine forgiveness. Baptism represents the heaven-appointed method of cleansing—it is the sign and pledge of forgiveness; it may be the means of its actual enjoyment, as it is intended to assure our hearts of the invaluable blessing. To confirm our hearts in the propitiation which God has set forth, and in our own interest in its blessed fruits, baptism brings us into the nearest contact with the lively symbols of these great realities. It is much more than the mere offer of forgiveness through Christ's blood; it represents a close, personal, individual application of that blood which cleanses from all sin, and of the benefits which it has procured. To all who have access to the ordinance, rightly administered, it offers a personal interest in the propitiatory sacrifice of the Lamb of God; it holds out, and brings near, the free and full remission of sin.³ To

¹ Acts ii. 38.

² Acts xxii. 16.

³ "Not that the external act can produce that result, or benefit the soul in any sense, for baptism is "not the putting away the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God;" but even in the impenitent and unbelieving, the purpose of God standeth sure. The ordinance is a sign of spiritual blessings; it is a sign of God's willingness to blot out iniquity, of freedom from guilt by Christ's atoning death, from pollution by

believers it actually seals and confirms these blessed privileges, and enables them to say, in joyful triumph, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and gave his Son to be a propitiation." "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits : who forgiveth all thine iniquities ; who healeth all thy diseases ; who redeemeth thy life from destruction ; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies."¹

5. Besides these great doctrines of *objective* Christianity, baptism emphatically teaches, likewise, the principal *subjective* truths of vital religion. It exhibits, by significant figure and symbol, the commencement of true religion in the soul, and its progress and completion. It compendiously displays the Christian's internal privileges, and points distinctly to his future blessed hopes—sealing him externally, as the Spirit does internally and really, to the day of redemption. Of these internal spiritual privileges, and as principal parts of subjective religion, may be mentioned—union to Christ, regeneration, adoption and sanctification, the hope of glory, and the resurrection of the body ; all these are more or less strikingly exhibited and taught in baptism.

1. *By faith we are united to Christ as our living Head.* Our whole person, soul and body, is joined to the Lord. The Holy Spirit is the agent and bond of this union, which can never be dissolved, and which is intimate and glorious beyond expression. We become one with Christ. He dwells in us, and we in Him. We are one spirit, "members of his flesh, of his body, and bones." So close is this vital union, that whatever Christ did and suffered, we are regarded as having in some sort passed through the same ; and whatever He is and has, becomes really ours. From this union springs a holy fellowship, and its precious fruits are reaped in all gracious dispositions and affections—extend even to the body in death, and comprehend the bliss of eternity. Baptism distinctly exhibits this spiritual union. "So many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ

his blood, and from the dominion of indwelling sin by his grace. It proclaims, to the eye of faith, this cheering truth, that a sponge of extinction may pass over the catalogue of our offences—the condemning handwriting for ever blotted out (Col. ii. 14) ; and the baptismal act thus *represents or signifies* the actual imparting of the fruits of Christ's death to the soul. Whenever there is faith in the heart these benefits are imparted ; and to be thus baptized is to be baptized with the Holy Ghost."—*The Sacrament of Baptism : its Nature, Design, and Obligations.* By Rev. W. K. Tweedie, pp. 19, 20.

¹ 1 John iv. 10 ; Psalm ciii. 2-4.

were baptized into his death.”¹ In the ordinance it is clearly set before us, and we avouch faith in the blessed provision. Thus by a significant symbol, are we publicly incorporated and ingrafted into Christ. The Lord thus seals our spiritual marriage to Himself, and we obtain the mark of being espoused to one husband, even Christ—of being betrothed to Him in faithfulness, in righteousness, in loving-kindness, and in judgment, even for ever.

2. *Regeneration and adoption* are, moreover, taught in baptism. Baptized into Christ’s death, buried with Him in baptism, we likewise rise with Him to newness of life. The baptismal institution is, beyond doubt, referred to when this great change is said to be “the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;”² and when, in our Lord’s discourse to Nicodemus, we are said to be “born of water and of the Spirit.”³ The ordinance is not itself, nor can it possibly be regeneration, nor is this great change inseparably connected with it.⁴ But yet the outward act is significant of the inward grace—it denotes being born of the Spirit, and created anew in Christ Jesus. Circumcision denotes the putting away of the sins of the flesh, and was the symbol of the circumcision of the heart,—its renewal in the Divine image, and its transformation to a new life of holiness. In baptism, the devil, the world, and the flesh, are renounced, and the baptized publicly declare, that to them “old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new.” In the fullest sense, the institution is a family ordinance; and bringing, as it does, in its right administration and reception, invaluable blessings to the members of Christian families, it strikingly exhibits connection with a higher family, “the household of faith”—the one family in heaven and earth that is named after Christ. It is the visible badge, the sign and pledge of our sonship by regeneration and adoption. The profession that we make in baptism is, that we have come out and are separate—that God is our father, and that we are the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty. Quickened together with Christ, we thus declare that we shall henceforth walk with Him in newness of life. “If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” “We have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.”⁵

3. *Our sanctification and hope of glory* are, moreover, distinctly taught in baptism. Baptism, as being a significant and expressive

¹ Rom. vi. 3. ² Titus iii. 5. ³ John iii. 5. ⁴ See App. ⁵ Rom. viii. 17, 15

symbol, is itself said to be a "washing away of sin." While it forcibly declares the necessity of moral purity, it exhibits the means by which it may be obtained, and it seals the persons baptized to holiness of heart and life. Every part of the work of sanctification is distinctly and impressively declared in this ordinance. It intimates separation from the world lying in wickedness, and fellowship with the family of God, who are designated "a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a peculiar people." It represents symbolically the great doctrine of "ingrafting into Christ,"—the root of living influences, from whom all growth in holiness is derived; and it holds forth the baptism of the Holy Spirit, "as with fire," by which corruption is destroyed, and the whole nature is renewed after the Divine image. It proclaims the mortification of sin, for we are dead with Christ in baptism, and buried with Him; and it expressively points out "the newness of life" to which we are raised "through the faith of the operation of God." In fine, there is no view of the great work of moral renovation, from its commencement in regeneration to its completion at death, that is not expressively and beautifully displayed in this ordinance. We are consecrated to God in baptism, and visibly sealed to be saints. Everything in the sacred solemnity has upon it the impress of holiness to the Lord. The place and scene of dedication, the thrice holy name into which we are baptized, the element employed, the acts of worship performed, and the blessings expected—all proclaim in the most emphatic manner that baptism is appointed to declare the necessity and nature of moral purity, and that it is itself an eminent means of sanctification. While it teaches that the subjects of the sacred rite should be holy in all manner of conversation, it furnishes the most powerful motives to cultivate purity of heart and life. It has thus a *moral* influence to excite to holiness, and to animate to new obedience. To all who are sprinkled with water in baptism, and named with the Divine name, it loudly proclaims, "BE YE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY;" and in the hand of the blessed Spirit, it has a *gracious* influence upon the heirs of salvation to lead them to depart from all iniquity, and to transform them into the moral likeness of Him who created them.

The ordinance, too, is fitted to declare and inspire the *hope of Sinai* salvation. The dedication made to God in baptism, we have encouragement to hope, He will graciously accept. When little children were brought to the Saviour in the days of his flesh, that He might touch them, in affecting condescension

He exceeded parental requests. "He took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them:"¹ and to assure Christian parents of his abundant good-will to their offspring, He said, "Of such is the kingdom of God." This cannot merely mean that all who shall be made partakers of the kingdom of God, must receive it with the spirit of little children; for this declaration, however true and important, did not meet the requirements of the applicants. It declared that children in infancy might be subjects of the Saviour's grace, and that some of this class would be heirs of his future kingdom of glory. Such a blessed hope the sacrament of baptism is strikingly fitted to inspire and sustain in believers. The individual baptized obtains by means of it "a good hope through grace." Reflecting on his early dedication, he may say, "I was solemnly given to the Lord; He was graciously pleased to permit me to be brought near to Him, and to provide a religious ordinance for this purpose. He will not cast out any who come to Him, and what has been committed to Him, He will keep against that day." Baptism seals the believer's hope in relation to all future good, whether as it respects deliverance from evil, or blessing to be enjoyed in soul or body, in life or death, or throughout eternity. The Lord remembers to his people the covenant of their youth, and the love of their espousals. He will deliver them from every evil work, and preserve them unto his everlasting kingdom.

4. Not only the future glorification of the soul, but also the *blessed resurrection of the body*, is exhibited and sealed to the faithful in baptism. The Apostle Paul, in the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians, connects the doctrine of the glorious resurrection of the saints with their baptism. "Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they then baptized for the dead?"² Whatever may be the special allusion of the apostle's inquiry, it clearly implies that if there were no blessed resurrection of the righteous, there would be no use of baptism. The baptized are exposed to sufferings and perils, and shall be brought to death. But their baptismal dedication symbolized the union of their whole person, in soul and body, to Christ their living Head. This union death cannot dissolve. Their flesh, on which the baptismal element was sprinkled, shall rest in hope; and the spirit that was given to God, He will keep and sanctify, and when separate from the body, receive to Himself in glory.

¹ Mark x. 16.

² I Corinthians xv. 29.

Of these great doctrines and precious privileges, baptism is the compendious but significant and assured pledge. "It is," says a distinguished expositor, "a sign, evidence, and assurance, both of the blessing promised by that God who appointed this ordinance, and of man's obligation to the duties required."¹ It is an explicit and continual testimony to great truths, which are of vital interest, and important to every human being. It has this peculiarity—it is instruction addressed to a number of the senses at once; and by its publicity and impressive character, it is eminently fitted to arrest the attention, and to excite inquiry. Spectators of the administration of baptism, even if unawakened, can hardly fail to ask, "What mean ye by this service?" and may receive from it many lessons of the most solemn and weighty kind. The true members of the Church will be instructed by it impressively in truths, which are the principle of their spiritual life, the means of their spiritual nourishment and comfort, and the foundation of all their blessed and joyful hopes. Above all, believers by their baptism are, through the agency of the Spirit, assured of their special interest in God's covenant, and of their enjoyment of his everlasting and unchangeable love. The ordinance is the visible seal of the covenant—the seal of the righteousness of faith. When God has thus graciously provided for the introduction of his people into his Church, they have a pledge from his own hand that his thoughts towards them are peace, and his designs mercy. They have the strongest evidence that He wills that they should not perish, but have everlasting life. He thus assures them that He loved them with an everlasting love; and that therefore He draws them with loving-kindness. Meditating on this provision of redeeming mercy, and considering their high and distinguishing privileges, they may grow up to a blessed and stable assurance, that nothing shall separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus their Lord. Enjoying the present hope of salvation, and having it sealed by their baptism, they may lay hold on eternal life, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

¹ Poole.

CHAPTER IV.

SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM.

THE question, Who are the proper subjects of baptism? has led to not a little controversy in the Church, and even, till our day, this topic furnishes occasion of keen and protracted discussion. As our object in this treatise is not controversial but practical, we shall not be drawn aside to matters of mere polemical warfare; while, at the same time, we regard it as a sacred duty to vindicate the right of a large class of the members of the Church to admission to the initiatory seal of the covenant, and to show that the privileges and obligations of the ordinance pertain to them as well as to others. Towards many of those who deny the doctrine of infant baptism, we desire to cherish no feelings inconsistent with the charity that thinketh no evil, or with the love of the brethren; as however mistaken we regard their views, and however much we lament their tendency and influence, we readily admit that among them are those who give evidence of being genuine disciples of Christ, and who have done much for the advancement of the glory of his name, and the interests of his kingdom.

Our Westminster Confession declares, in brief and comprehensive terms, who are the proper *subjects* of baptism: "Not only those that do actually profess faith in, and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants of one, or both, believing parents, are to be baptized."¹ This is the sentiment of all the Reformed Churches, as expressed in their doctrinal symbols; and it was maintained by all the reformers as a precious article in the faith which was once delivered to the saints, and only opposed by a small fanatical sect, called Anabaptists, which sprung up in Germany, with which we would be sorry to identify the Baptists of the present day.² In

¹ Chap. xxiv. sect. iv.

² Jones, in his *History of the Waldenses*, labours to prove that these early witnesses for evangelical truth maintained not the doctrine of infant baptism; and that they, in practice, refused to allow their infant children to be baptized; but this view is certainly unsupported by sufficient historical

the statement from the Westminster Standards, which we have just quoted, *two* classes are declared to be fit subjects of baptism—1. Those who “do actually profess faith in, and obedience unto Christ;” and 2. “The infants of believing parents.” Concerning the right of the former class to the sacrament of baptism, there is no difference of opinion among any parties in the Church. Those who deny the right of the infant children of the members of the Church to baptism, equally with those who maintain it, admit that adults are to be baptized, on evidence of their faith and repentance, and on their profession of the doctrine of Christ. The Quakers, or Society of Friends, alone, under the pretence of maintaining the spirituality of the Gospel dispensation, and while cherishing fanatical views of the Spirit’s work, set aside the sacraments as material and carnal ordinances.

Throughout the Church generally, and in all ages, the symbol of admission to fellowship, and the seal of her spiritual privileges, has been baptism. We who advocate the practice of infant baptism, are as ready to administer the ordinance to Christian proselytes, converted heathens, or Jews, or Mohammedans, or to those who seek admission to Church membership, and who were not baptized in infancy, as the opponents of this doctrine. When they allege that all the cases of baptism recorded in the New Testament are those of adults, and employ this as an argument against the baptism of infants, we object at once to the conclusion as wholly unwarranted from the premises. The cases of baptism administered by the apostles, and first ministers of Christianity, were evidently those of persons who, like the converts from Jew and Gentile under the ministrations of Christian missionaries in our own day, were convinced by the power of the truth, and embraced it; and were, in consequence, baptized as the badge of their profession and the seal of their privileges. But we have not on record in the New Testament a single instance of the child of a Christian parent being allowed to grow up to adult age

evidence. Because the Waldenses, in many cases, refused to admit, with their Romanist persecutors, that children dying unbaptized perished eternally, and would not receive the ordinance from the hands of the Romish priesthood, therefore were they held as maintaining the sentiment that infants are not proper subjects of baptism. The attempt to identify the Waldenses with the Antipædobaptists, is only sustained by the charges of enemies against them; and the allegation is amply refuted, both by the scriptural sentiments which they faithfully maintained, and by their recorded practice, as exhibited in different periods of their history.

before being baptized; while there is strong presumptive evidence to the contrary.

In adult baptism, it is required as a pre-requisite, that the candidate "profess faith in Christ and obedience unto Him;" and though a few in England and Germany attempt to set aside such a profession as unnecessary, yet the instances of baptism contained in the Scriptures, whether of Jewish proselytes, or of John the Baptist, or of the apostles, were plainly connected with a definite and public profession; and the terms of the apostolic commission, as well as the design of baptism, obviously imply that the profession precedes the rite of admission to membership.¹ When the Saviour, on the eve of his ascension to glory, instituted the ordinance of baptism, He commanded his disciples first to "disciple all nations," and then to baptize them.² A visible profession of discipleship, then, entitles to the ordinance of baptism. Of the state of the heart, and the reality of faith, God alone is judge; and this can never, without daring presumption, be assumed by man as the ground of admission to the Church and its privileges. An intelligent profession of faith, a competent knowledge of the Gospel, and a walk in accordance with such a profession, must be deemed sufficient to admission to the fellowship of Christ's people. Less cannot be regarded as compatible with the Christian name; and no person having due respect to the authority of the Redeemer can properly refuse admission to the fellowship of the Church to those who possess these qualifications.

The right of the other class—the infant children of Christians—to baptism, has been contravened, and vehemently opposed, and it requires, therefore, a fuller statement and elucidation. We feel the need of "contending earnestly for the faith" on this article, inasmuch as we regard baptism as a precious privilege, of which those who deny infant baptism would

¹ Dr Halley, in his *Congregational Lectures on the Sacraments*, says—"There are those who baptize all applicants whatsoever, provided the application does not appear to be made scoffingly and profanely, for that would be a manifest desecration of the service, and all children offered by their parents, guardians, or others, who may have the care of them. These interpret the commission in the widest sense, and most literally explain 'all the nations.'" This view of the subject of the ordinance Dr Halley advocates with all his power. See remarks on it in the Appendix.

² Bloomfield in his *Greek Testament* says,—“The commission embraces three particulars—*μαθητευω, βαπτιξεν, and διδασκειν*—i. e., 1. To disciple them to the faith; 2. to initiate them into the Church by baptism; and 3. to instruct them, when baptized, in the doctrines and duties of a Christian life.”

deprive believing parents and their children, and as fraught with many and valuable benefits to the dedicated youth of the Church. As a very large proportion of the human family die in infancy and childhood—according to some, not fewer than *one-fourth* or *one-fifth*—it must appear to be a matter of very grave importance to determine clearly whether the children of Christian parents are, in infancy, to receive the visible seal of God's covenant, and to be openly admitted to the fellowship of the Church, or to be excluded from these privileges.

Before exhibiting the evidence in proof of the right of the infant seed of believers to the ordinance of baptism, it may be requisite to advert briefly to the mode of argument by which this right is established. It is fully conceded that there is not a positive command, in direct terms, for baptizing infants. Antipædobaptists generally contend that as baptism is a *positive rite*, nothing less than an express precept can suffice to warrant its application to children in infancy. They reject inferential reasoning on the subject, and assert that, in this instance, it is wholly inadmissible. Yet it may be clearly shown that there is no proper ground of refusing assent to a proposition established by fair and legitimate inference. Some of the most profound reasoners have laid it down as a principle, that “a strong presumption,” or just inference, is sufficient to decide a question of the greatest practical importance. Bishop Butler declares, “To us probability is the very guide of life;” and again, “In questions of difficulty, where more satisfactory evidence cannot be had, if there appears on the whole any, the *lowest presumption* on one side, and none on the other, or a greater presumption on the one side, though in the *lowest degree* greater, this determines the question, even in matters of speculation; and, in matters of practice, will lay us under an *absolute obligation* to act upon that presumption.”¹ Even Dr Carson, a celebrated Baptist writer, says, “I receive what is made out by inference, just as I receive the most direct statement.”

The opponents of infant baptism, in objecting against the mode of argument employed by its friends, have recourse to a principle which cannot be maintained in the ordinary affairs of life; and which, if admitted, would go far to deny some of the essential doctrines of Christianity, and to reject some of its recognized usages. In the most important points of the practical business of life, men decide and act, as Butler has remarked, on probability rather than positive evidence; and, in courts of

¹ Butler's *Analogy of Natural and Revealed Religion*, Introd., p. 5.

justice, where *positive* and *direct* proof is not to be had, persons are convicted and punished, and life is even taken away, on circumstantial evidence.

Antipædobaptists themselves are forced to admit many truths that are established as truths, by "plain and necessary inference," from other principles or truths that are clearly revealed in the Scriptures. Thus the genuineness of several of the books contained in the canon of Scripture—the observance of the Sabbath from Adam to Moses, the Divine institution of the Christian Sabbath, and the admission of females to the Lord's Supper—are fully admitted by the opponents of infant baptism, and yet none of these can be proved by express positive injunction; they are to be received, as of Divine prescription, on evidence, which, though inferential, is satisfactory and conclusive. The principle, therefore, assumed by Antipædobaptists, in objecting against the mode of proof adduced in favour of infant baptism, is opposed to the laws of sound reasoning, and subversive of important truths of Divine revelation, and of usages which have always been observed in the Church of Christ. Those who object against reasoning by inference, on the subject of infant baptism, are themselves obliged to have recourse to it in many other cases, some of which are similar. The conclusion to which their inconsistent conduct inevitably leads is, that, blinded by system, they have had recourse to principles which are altogether untenable. By dogmatical assertion, instead of legitimate argument, they labour to get rid of the proof in favour of a valuable privilege to an important class of the members of the Church.

That the infant children of believing parents are to be admitted to baptism, we argue from the following considerations:—

1. The infant children of members of the Church were once, by Divine prescription, *admitted to the fellowship and privileges of the Church by a public religious rite*. Throughout the whole of the Divine dispensations towards the Church, parents and their children are regarded as closely associated. This has been the method of the Divine government in every age. Man is, by his constitution, a social being; and true religion takes hold of the social principle, and purifies and elevates it. From the earliest period, God included children with their parents in the covenant of peace, and in the promise of blessing. He did so to Noah, to Abraham, and to other Old Testament patriarchs. The apostles declared the same divinely-established

connection: "*Thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*" "*The promise is to you and your children.*" The rite of infant dedication results from this relation between parents and their children: it is its outward expression, and declares loudly that children are admissible with their parents to the Church of Christ, and to the bond of his covenant. When God appointed circumcision at first, it was for parents, together with their children; though, from express injunction, the infant children of Jewish parents alone were afterwards to be circumcised. This rite, it deserves to be remarked, did not originate in the Mosaic ritual, but in the family of Abraham, who is expressly declared to be "the father of all that believe," whether Jew or Gentile.

The rite of circumcision was evidently *spiritual*, and was connected with a covenant which, though it guaranteed temporal benefits to the descendants of Abraham, mainly held out to the faithful spiritual blessings. It confirmed the grand fundamental promise, "I will be a God to thee, and thy seed after thee;" and the Divine Spirit expressly exalts it above a mere temporary ratification to a spiritual and significant symbol, when He declares it was "a seal of the righteousness of the faith which Abraham had while he was uncircumcised."¹ We are thus instructed, by an unerring Teacher, to regard the rite as a solemn confirmation of a grant of spiritual privileges of the most valuable and extensive kind, and as a token or badge of admission to the select society to which these privileges pertained. The express appointment of such a rite for infant children, at one period of the Church, proves that there is not only nothing unsuitable in such an ordinance still, but would seem to be founded on the natural relation between parents and their children, and on the identity of parents and children as subjects of blessing or punishment, which has always been a fundamental principle of the Divine government.

2. *Children, with their parents, were included in the Abrahamic covenant.* This important transaction is distinctly recorded in Genesis, chapter xvii., and is afterwards particularly referred to in Genesis xxii. It occurs in these gracious terms, "I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee."² A simple-minded reader of the Scriptures cannot fail to discern in this gracious transaction a revelation of the covenant of redemption—the blessed plan

¹ Romans iv. 11.

² Genesis xvii. 7.

devised by the persons of the glorious Godhead for the salvation of sinners of the human family. The exalted Being who, under the august title, *El-Shaddai*—"God Almighty"—entered into covenant with the patriarch; the grand fundamental promise, "I will be a God to thee, and unto thy seed after thee;" the obedience required, prescribed in the command, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect;" and the blessings guaranteed—Abraham to be "the father of many nations;" Jehovah to be the God of their seed, and an "everlasting" possession in the promised land—these certainly indicate not a *temporary* transaction, but refer directly to those spiritual blessings which are the peculiar inheritance of the saints in all generations.

The opponents of infant baptism, as if apparently conscious of the force of the reasoning in favour of the admission of the children of professed believers to the seal of the fellowship and privileges of the Church, taken from the Abrahamic covenant, have laboured to show that that transaction was merely a national covenant, including only the natural descendants of Abraham, and that it held forth only temporal privileges, such as the possession of Canaan, and outward prosperity. When pressed in argument, and unable to reconcile this low view of the Abrahamic covenant with the gracious declarations and promises made to the patriarch, they sometimes maintain that there were two covenants with Abraham—one referring to his spiritual seed, and the other to his natural descendants; or that the same covenant referred, in one view, literally to his fleshly seed, and in another, typically, to the spiritual seed. It is sufficient to remark, in relation to this latter view, that it is wholly conjectural, and that it is obviously introduced to meet the necessities of a system which is palpably at variance with the plain and reiterated statements of the Divine Word. In the inspired account of God's covenanting with the father of the faithful, there is not the slightest mention of two covenants,¹

¹ It might as well be maintained that God made *six* covenants with Abraham as two, inasmuch as we read of federal transactions occurring at different times in the life of the patriarch—as in Gen. xii. 1-3, and in ver. 7; again in Gen. xiii. 14-17; Gen. xiv. 4-18; Gen. xvii. 2-14; and in Gen. xxii. 16-18. But the truth is, these were only different exhibitions of the one gracious federal transaction,—the blessings promised being variously expressed to meet the circumstances of Abraham and his seed. The promise held forth in the first of these federal engagements, mentioned in Gen. xii., guaranteed the same spiritual blessing as that stated in Gen. xvii. to which the rite of circumcision was annexed. This point is very fully illustrated.

nor any reference to a twofold seed; and no distinction is in the least hinted at, as if one set of the promises pertained to the natural posterity of Abraham, and another set to the spiritual seed. Moreover, that the blessings promised to the spiritual seed of Abraham were only typical is a gratuitous assumption, without any proper foundation or warrant in the Scriptures. Though the people of Israel were, in one view, typical, and the privileges they enjoyed were "shadows of good things to come," yet to believers of the Jewish nation pertained *real* and not typical blessings, equally as to believers under the New Testament—the portion of the fearers of God—an inheritance among all those that are sanctified.

Even were it admitted that the covenant made with Abraham was of a temporal character, and had only respect to the patriarch and his natural descendants, and secured to them temporal blessings alone, it would still show that parents and their children were regarded as interested in the same covenant; and as these blessings were gracious providential benefits flowing from God as a Father, that they enjoyed a heritage of Divine favour distinguished above the rest of mankind.¹ But to an attentive and prayerful reader of the Bible, there can be no doubt that the Abrahamic covenant was a special revelation of the covenant of redemption—substantially the same under which believers now are, and have always been placed. "I WILL BE THY GOD" is still the grand promise of the Gospel—the offer and guarantee of all gracious privileges—an epitome of all saving and eternal blessings. We admit that the covenant secured to Abraham and his seed various temporal blessings, but these were subordinate and subsidiary to the spiritual. It proclaimed the same connection in the participation of gracious benefits, the fruit of Divine favour, as yet exists under the New Testament economy: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." "The Lord God is a sun and shield: He will give grace and glory, and will withhold no good from them that walk uprightly." "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things?"²

The Abrahamic covenant being thus, in substance, the and the argument in favour of infant baptism, taken from the Abrahamic covenant, is very satisfactorily stated in "Four Discourses on the Abrahamic Covenant," contained in *Theological Discourses on Important Subjects, Doctrinal and Practical*, by the late Rev. James Thomson of Quarrelwood.

¹ See *Lectures on Baptism*, by Thomas M'Crie, D.D., p. 56.

² Matthew vi. 33; Psalm lxxxiv. 11; Romans viii. 32.

covenant of grace in the hand of the glorious Mediator, and conveying, as it did, to the patriarch the comprehensive assurance, "In thee, and in thy seed, shall all the families of the earth be blessed," is properly to be regarded as the great *charter of the visible Church*. During the whole period that elapsed from the transaction on the plains of Mamre till the coming of Christ, and the setting up of the new economy, the visible Church was to be exclusively confined to the descendants of Abraham, in the line of Isaac. Whoever of other families came into connection with it, were to become incorporated with the Abrahamic race, and, as proselytes, to receive the visible mark of the covenant. The external rite is to the same Church, and there is the same charter of privileges, and will be till the end of time. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."¹ The apostle's reasoning in the preceding verses makes it exceedingly plain that the Abrahamic covenant was of no temporary character, and that it is still the charter of the visible Church, and that in which all believers have a solemn personal interest. In verse 14th, he states the gracious design of Christ's death—that of conferring the blessing promised to Abraham upon all believers, "that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." Again, in verses 17 and 18, he declares emphatically, "And this I say, that the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was 430 years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise." This plainly declares that the transaction at Sinai, which took place 430 years after God covenanted with Abraham, was of a temporary nature, and did not set aside, or make void the Abrahamic covenant; in other words, that it remains still in force. It was "confirmed before of God in Christ," and was that covenant which never waxes old: of which all believers are "heirs according to the promise."

To every unprejudiced person, it must appear exceedingly manifest that this covenant with Abraham was therefore a dispensation of the covenant of grace, holding forth and

¹ Galatians iii. 28, 29.

confirming the Church's chartered privileges, and securing to believers, the heirs of salvation, the enjoyment of all blessings. It is equally plain that infants were joined with their parents in this beneficent arrangement; and we are thus warranted to conclude that the right of those who are interested in the same covenant to its outward seal, is indisputable—that those who have fellowship with the same chartered society are entitled to the badge of incorporation.¹

3. Circumcision, the visible seal of the Abrahamic covenant, was a religious rite designed to signify spiritual blessings and privileges, and baptism has the same character and significance. *Infants had a right to circumcision under the Old Testament, therefore are they entitled to the ordinance which has come in its room, and which denotes substantially the same privileges and duties.* That the rite of circumcision was appended to a covenant of spiritual blessings, however this is denied by the opponents of infant baptism, would appear to be clearly taught in the inspired account of its first institution. It deserves to be remarked that circumcision was not ordained when God first called Abraham, and entered into covenant with him. It was not instituted till at least *twenty-four years* after God appeared to the patriarch in Ur of the Chaldees, when He renewed the covenant with him, and declared, "I am God Almighty, walk before me, and be thou perfect. I will be a God to thee and thy seed." This comprehensive promise is not mentioned in Genesis xii., when God first appeared to Abraham, nor in connection with the subsequent manifestation recorded in Genesis xxii. But when it is stated in all the fulness and grace of the blessing in chapter xvii., it is immedi-

¹ The promise made to Abraham and his seed is still endorsed to us and our children. Peter's discourse on the day of Pentecost (Acts ii. 38) was spoken in connection with the command, "Repent, and be baptized." The right of children to baptism appears to us plainly taught in the apostle's declaration. The parent's interest in the promise is stated as a reason why he should be baptized; and the assertion that the promise pertains to the children too, certainly proves that there is as good a reason why *they* too should be baptized. To suppose otherwise would be, in effect, to make the apostle declare, "The promise is to you, therefore you should be baptized; and the same promise is to your children, but they must *not* be baptized." The Spirit, however, does not thus speak incoherently and absurdly. The promise, when first given, included infants with their parents; and to confirm it both were circumcised. It still, under the ministration of the Spirit, refers directly to children in infancy, as well as their parents; and consequently, they are entitled to the rite of confirmation in baptism. See *Sermons on the Mode and Subjects of Christian Baptism*, by Joseph Lathorpe, D.D., p. 64

ately ratified by the rite of circumcision. Mere natural descent from Abraham did not form an undisputed title to membership in the Old Testament Church, or to its offices.¹ The rite of circumcision was evidently meant to signify *spiritual* blessings, and not those which were merely carnal and temporary. In the Old Testament it is frequently spoken of as symbolical of moral purity, and as denoting the renovation of the heart. "Circumcise," says God by Moses, "the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked."² And again, God declares in the way of gracious promise, "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul."³ Speaking of the moral impurity of the heathen, and the corruption of Israel, Jeremiah says, "All the nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in heart."⁴ And Isaiah, predicting the purity of the Church under the New Testament, says, "Henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean."⁵ This is the primitive meaning and design of the rite of circumcision, as it was "of the fathers," and before it was incorporated with the institutions of Moses. To this its original design and symbolical meaning, the apostle obviously refers, when he says, "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly: and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."⁶

By circumcision, as a seal of God's covenant, the subjects of the rite were pledged to a life of holiness. Every one that was circumcised, the apostle assures us, was "a debtor to do the whole law."⁷ Infants, by Divine appointment, were circumcised; and, therefore, notwithstanding the alleged incompatibility of an outward rite to entail obligation, it is morally certain that they were pledged to a personal righteousness in the covenant—that they became debtors even at EIGHT DAYS OLD, to do the whole law of God. Baptism occupies now the place of circumcision. They are the seals of the same covenant; they denote the same spiritual blessings and privileges, and they are badges of profession—the one of the ancient religion

¹ This point is well illustrated in the very able work of Dr Wilson on *Infant Baptism a Scriptural Service, and Dipping unnecessary to its right Administration*. See p. 393.

² Deut. x. 16.

³ Deut. xxx. 6.

⁴ Jer. ix. 26.

⁵ Isa. lii. 1.

⁶ Rom. ii. 28, 29.

⁷ Gal. v. 3.

instituted by God, and the other of that which exists under a dispensation of greater spirituality and higher privilege. With circumstantial diversity,¹ the two ordinances are identical in their spiritual use and significancy. Circumcision plainly declared the natural corruption of the heart and life, exhibited the necessity of internal purity, and the scriptural method of its attainment. It was a sign and seal of the righteousness of faith, and represented actual investiture with it in justification. It was the token of admission to God's Church ; and while it proclaimed the subjects of it to be "a peculiar people," and a "holy nation," it forcibly exhibited their obligation to obey the Divine law. All these uses are clearly denoted by the New Testament ordinance of baptism ; and the Spirit evidently represents the two ordinances as having the same use and signification, when He says, "And ye are complete in Him, in whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the sins of the flesh by *the circumcision of Christ* ; being buried with Him in baptism."² Baptism is here designated "the circumcision of Christ ;" and Christians are reminded that, by the outward seal in baptism, they enjoy the same privileges as did those who were circumcised of old. They are sealed to covenant privilege and obedience, and are marked as being enrolled in fellowship with Christ and his people. To the Hebrew believing parent, it was regarded as a high and precious privilege to have his infant seed joined with himself in the same blessed charter of spiritual benefits, and in the inheritance of the same holy privileges. God's method has always been to *extend* rather than to *abridge* the privileges of his people, under successive dispensations of the covenant. If infants are now inadmissible to the seal of the covenant, and the fellowship and privileges of the Church, this would be to reverse God's gracious way of dealing with his people. But when baptism is viewed as standing in the room of circumcision and superseding it, the Divine method of dispensing blessing is beautifully carried out. If children were no longer to be admitted to the seal of the covenant, it would

¹ Circumcision was confined to the Jews, and to such as became proselytes of the strictest kind to the Jewish religion ; baptism extends to all nations. Males alone were circumcised ; while females, as well as males, are to be baptized. Bondsmen could only be circumcised with the consent of their masters ; slaves may be fully admitted to baptism. These differences in the administration of the initiatory rite are sufficiently accounted for, from the enlarged privileges and design of the Gospel economy.

² Colossians ii. 10-12.

have demanded a clear, authoritative declaration from God that so great a change had been made in the conditions of membership in the Church. None such, however, has been given, and the inference is most natural, that infants are still to be admitted, by a rite similar to circumcision, to the same spiritual privileges as their parents. Enlarged privilege is enjoyed through the Christian rite, in the admission of females as well as males, and in extending it to all nations. To Christian parents, as well as to Jewish, it was declared at the day of Pentecost, "The promise is to you, and your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."¹ The Gospel promise is not only to believers, but to their children likewise; and, of course, that which is appointed to confirm and ratify it pertains to them too. This is manifestly inconsistent with what is implied in the denial of infant baptism—the abandoning of rights formerly secured to them, and casting them out as being in no better condition than the heathen, or than the world lying in wickedness. Under the Gospel, the blessing of Abraham has come upon believing Gentiles. They are heirs of the promise, and their children, as of old, are reckoned with them, as entitled to the same privileges; and they are, therefore, fully entitled to the rite of admission—the seal of actual participation.

4. *The New Testament Church is a continuation of the Old:* and this implies that the external manner of admission will not be materially different. Those who oppose infant baptism seem not to have correct views of the identity of the Church under the Old and New Testament dispensations; and some of them expressly deny it.² The identity of the

¹ Acts ii. 39.

² In Goodwin's *Redemption Redeemed*, there is given a striking and just account of the evil consequences of denying infant baptism, which, although rather lengthened for a note, we give as illustrative of some of the views which are presented above. The author is showing the calamities to which a man is exposed who is wedded to any error. One of these calamities is, the errorist "makes himself a debtor to own and maintain, upon occasion, the whole tribe and family of errors whereof this is a member; or else he must represent himself as a man inconsistent with himself, and prevaricating with his own principles." In illustration, he refers to the error of anti-pædobaptism, and says—"He that is entangled with the error of those who deny the lawfulness of infant baptism, stands obliged, through his engagement to this one error, to maintain and make good these and many the like erroneous and anti-evangelical opinions:—

"1. That God was more gracious to infants under the law, than now He is under the Gospel; or which is every whit as hard a saying as this, that his vouchsafement of circumcision unto them, under the law, was no

Church under both economies is, however, clearly taught by many express declarations of Holy Scripture, and is fundamental to a right understanding of the Divine dispensations towards the Church in all ages. Believing members became Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. The natural branches of the goodly olive tree, the fleshly seed of the patriarch, are broken off and rejected—the branches that were wild by nature are grafted in, and partake of the fat and sweetness of the tree. It is the same green and fruitful olive, existing under different states of the Divine economy, and continuing till the consummation of all things. Into external connection with the Church, infants were formerly brought by an instituted rite, divinely prescribed. They were expressly recognized as forming a component part of the Old Testament Church, and were thus entitled to the rite of initiation. When Moses addressed the thousands of Israel on the plains of Moab, and, by renewing the national covenant with them, engaged

argument or sign at all of any grace or favour from Him unto them.

2. That God never regarded and made more liberal provision for the comfort and satisfaction of typical believers, though formal and express unbelievers in and about the spiritual condition of their children, under the law, than He does for the truest, soundest, and greatest believers, under the Gospel; or which is of a like notorious import, that the ordinance of God, for the circumcising of infants under the law, was of no accommodation or concernment for the comfort of the parents, touching the spiritual condition of their children.
3. That the children of true believers, under the Gospel, are more unworthy, more unmeet, less capable subjects of baptism, than the children of the Jews were of circumcision under the law; or, which is of like uncouth notion, that God accepted the persons of the children of the Jews, though unbelievers, and rejects the persons of the children of believers under the Gospel, from the same or the like grace, these being under no greater guilt or demerit than those other.
4. That baptism succeedeth not in the place, office, or service of circumcision.
5. That when the initiatory sacrament was more grievous and burthensome in the letter of it, God ordered the application of it unto children; but after He had made a change of it for that which is more gracious, and much more accommodate to the tenderness and weakness of children, as baptism clearly is, in respect of circumcision, He hath wholly excluded children from it.
6. That it was better and more edifying to men under the law to receive the pledge of God's fatherly love and care over them, whilst they were yet children; and that it is worse, or less edifying, to men to receive it at the same time; and better and more edifying unto them to receive it afterwards—as, viz., when they come to years of discretion.
7. That men are wiser, and more providential than God—as, viz., in debarring, or keeping children from baptism, for fear of such and such inconveniences; whereas God by NO LAW, or PROHIBITION OF HIS, interposeth against their baptizing, nor yet insisteth upon, or mentioneth the least inconvenience anyways likely to come upon either the persons of the children themselves, nor upon the Churches of Christ hereby.
8. And, lastly (to pass by many other

them to be the Lord's, he said : " Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God, . . . your little ones,"¹ &c. The persons enumerated form the different parts of the congregation, and " little ones " are expressly embraced in the privileges and obligations of the covenant. In that solemn transaction, God promised to be a God to his people and their seed ; and accordingly, in this renewal of it, Moses directly refers to the Divine arrangement with the former patriarchs, " That He may establish thee to-day for a people unto Himself ; and that He may be unto thee a God, as He hath said unto thee ; *and as He hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.*" We are thus distinctly instructed that what was guaranteed to Abraham is secured to the Church in succeeding generations. Infants have a place in the covenant, and are entitled to connection with God's sanctuary, equally with the most eminent of the patriarchs—with Abraham and Moses themselves. The " little ones " formed a part of the visible Church, and are so recognized. Notwithstanding external changes, the Church of the Old and New Testament is essentially the same under different economies. It is by profession and separation " a holy nation, and a peculiar people." The Gentiles incorporated in the visible Church have a right to all its privileges. One of the most valuable of these is this, that parents and their children are alike regarded as members of the Church—as a portion of God's royal priesthood and peculiar people. The promise declared by Peter on the day of Pente-

tenets and opinions, every whit as exorbitant from the truth, and as untenable as these, which yet must be maintained by those who suffer their judgments to be encumbered with the error of antipædobaptism, unless they will say and unsay, deny in the consequent what they affirm and grant in the antecedent), and that which is more than what hath been said yet, they must, upon the account of their enthrallment under the said error, maintain many uncouth, harsh, irrational, venturous, and daring interpretations and expositions of many texts and passages of Scripture, and particularly of these—Gen. xvii. 7 ; 1 Cor. vii. 14 ; Acts ii. 39, and xvi. 15 ; 1 Cor. i. 16, and x. 2 : besides many others, which frequently, upon occasion, are argued in way of defence and proof of the lawfulness of infant baptism. Now, as the Greek epigram maketh it the highway to beggary to have many bodies to feed, and many houses to build, so may it truly enough be said, that for a professor of Christianity to have many errors to maintain, and many rotten opinions to build up, is the next way to bring him to a morsel of bread—not only in his name and reputation among intelligent men, but also in the goodness of his heart and conscience before God. Nor is it of much more desirable an interpretation, for such a man to appear distracted in his principles, or divided in himself."—Goodwin's *Reclamation Kalemel*, pp. 11, 12.

¹ Deuteronomy xxix.

cost, to pertain to believers in Christ and their children, extends to all within the Church till the end of time. Infants were certainly admitted into the fellowship of the Church from the days of Abraham till the death of Christ; and we neither find Christ nor his apostles ever declaring that they were afterwards to be excluded. The Church being one, as the charter of its privileges is the same, its membership is composed of the same classes; and the mode of admission is substantially the same under the one economy and the other.

Our Lord's welcome to children, pronounced in the days of his flesh, implies their membership, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, . . . for of such is the kingdom of God."¹ The "kingdom of God" here evidently means the visible Church; and the Saviour expressly declares that infants belong to the Church, and are numbered with his disciples. When it is said "of such," &c., it cannot merely mean that persons of a childlike disposition compose the kingdom of God, for this would assign no proper reason why infants should be brought to Christ, nor for our Lord's being displeased with the disciples for seeking to hinder their approach.² If infants are thus declared by our Lord to belong to his Church, then there is certainly no proper reason why they may not be formally and solemnly declared such by baptism. Besides, it cannot be affirmed that they may not have been baptized on this occasion. Our Lord baptized not, but his disciples; and by laying his hands on them, and blessing them, He as solemnly received them as they could have been by the external rite³

¹ Mark x. 14.

² It has been sometimes alleged by Antipædobaptists that these were not infants at all. But the word *βρεφῆ*, employed by the Evangelist Luke, and properly translated "infants," as well as our Lord's "taking them in his arms," is decisive on the subject. When it is, moreover, alleged by the same writers that our Lord did not *baptize*, but only "*blessed them*," this makes nothing against the argument that infants form part of the Church of God. The word "*such*," is often used in Sacred Scripture, not to denote outward *resemblance*, but a *distinction*. "Such an High Priest became us," "such an one as Paul, the aged," cannot surely mean persons resembling this High Priest, or Paul the Apostle. In like manner, the Lord's declaration concerning infants is tantamount to saying that children, as well as adults, are members of his Church.

³ Knapp in his *Theology*, under the head of "Infant Baptism," makes the following judicious remarks respecting our Lord's reception of infants: "That infant baptism, considered as a solemn rite of consecration, cannot be opposed to the design and will of Christ, may be concluded from his own declaration (Mat. xix. 14): 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not—των γαρ τοιουτων εστιν η βασιλεια του Θεου; for of such is the

which denotes the conveyance of spiritual blessings.¹ In his discourse to Nicodemus, our Lord declares that none enter his kingdom but such as are *born of water*, &c. ; and the expression being generally understood to contain an allusion to baptism, would imply that, if children are inadmissible to baptism by water, they are excluded from the kingdom of God. Devoid of membership in the Church here, they are cut off from the hopes of eternal salvation—a conclusion this from which, although avowed by some Baptist writers, the pious mind recoils.

The passage in 1 Cor. vii. 14 has an immediate reference to the right of infants to infant membership in the visible Church—“For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband ; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy.” Under the Old Testament, infants had always been received as members of God’s Church. But when, in the days of Ezra, the restored captives had, contrary to an express injunction, contracted marriages with the heathen around, it was ordained that the children born of such a connection, with their heathen parents, should be put away as unclean. It seems probable that this gave rise to the question in the Corinthian Church, whether a Christian, or believing husband or wife, should continue with an unbelieving partner. To this the apostle gave an affirmative answer. Believers are indeed only to marry in the Lord ; but when both were unbelieving at the time when they entered into the conjugal state, the subsequent faith of one of the parties does not dissolve the relation. If it did, “then,” says the apostle, “were your children unclean, but now are they holy.” In some sense the children of parents, of which one is a Christian, are holy. This cannot mean, as some Antipædo-baptists say,² *legitimate*, for marriage is valid, whether the parties are Christian or not. Nor does it intend real internal holiness, for this is not of the flesh, but of the will and grace of God.

kingdom of God. This is, indeed, no command for infant baptism ; but if children are, and should have a share in the Christian Church, and in all Christian privileges, βασιλεια του Θεου, it cannot be improper to introduce them into the Christian Church by this solemn rite of initiation. And if, according to the design of Christ, children, from their earliest youth up, are to have a share in the rites and privileges of Christians, it must also be agreeable to his will solemnly to introduce them, by this rite of consecration, into the nursery of his disciples. Compare 1 Cor. vii. 14.”

¹ See *Lathorpe’s Discourses*, disc. ii. p. 59.

² This is the opinion of Dr Gill ; see *Complete Body of Doctrinal and Practical Divinity*.

It is *relative* or *federal* holiness that is intended.¹ The children of professed believers are holy, as the people of Israel were holy, by special covenant relation to God. Under the law the firstborn were said to be holy, as they were specially dedicated to God.² The Christian Church is designated "the Church of the firstborn;"³ and being thus holy, and within his covenant, infant children are surely entitled to the visible mark of membership and federal relationship. The unbelieving partner, in the conjugal state, is sanctified by the other party, not in relation to God, but to his or her yoke-fellow. The children are holy, as opposed to the "unclean" or the heathen, as they

¹ In the *Treatise on Election*, by Thomas Goodwin, the author labours in book v. to show "that election, in its ordinary course, runs from believing parents to their posterity; that the covenant of grace is entailed upon the children of believers; and that God most usually makes them his choice."—*Goodwin's Works*, vol. ix., pp. 426-499.

² Schleusner says *Ακαθαρτος* signifies "that which is prohibited by the Mosaic law, or that from which the people of God were required to separate themselves." On Acts x. 28, he remarks, "A man is there called *ακαθαρτον*, *unclean*, with whom the Jews thought it unlawful to have any familiar intercourse." He quotes the passage in 2 Cor. vi. 17, as confirmatory of this view. *Ακαθαρτου μη άπτειθε*—touch not the unclean thing—that is, as the connection shows, have no intercourse with Pagans. The text under consideration he renders, "Alioquin et liberi nostri remoti essent e societate Christianorum"—"Otherwise your children also would be removed from the society of Christians." Lightfoot advances the same views. The words *ακαθαρτα* and *άγια*, he says, refer not to legitimacy or illegitimacy, but to the Gentile or Christian state; that the children of Gentiles or Pagans were, by the Jews, considered as *ακαθαρτοι*, *unclean*, and the children of the Jews *άγιοι*, holy, and that the apostle refers to this well-known sense of the word; that his treatment of the subject does not turn on this hinge—whether a child, born of parents, one of whom was a Christian, and the other a heathen, was a *legitimate* offspring, but whether he was a Christian offspring." Whitby, after ably expounding the passage, confutes the rendering, "Else were your children bastards," by saying, "The word for bastard by the apostle being *νοθος* (Heb. xii. 8), and the word *γνησιος* being the proper word for a legitimate offspring. Had the apostle intended such a sense, he would have used the words which, in Greek writers, are generally used in that sense, and not such words as in the Septuagint, and in the Jewish writers, always have a relation to *federal* holiness, or the want of it." Calvin, in his *Institutes*, lib. iv. cap. 10, assigns substantially the same meaning to the words of the apostle. "The children of the Jews, because they were made heirs of the covenant, and distinguished from the children of the impious, were called a holy seed; and, for the same reason, the children of Christians, even when only one of the parents is pious, are accounted holy; and, according to the testimony of the apostle, differ from the impure seed of idolaters." These authorities, and a number of others, are given in a very clear and satisfactory exposition of the passage in question, in *Lectures on Infant Baptism*, by Leonard Woods, D.D., of Andover, pp. 80-95.

³ Hebrews xii. 23.

are dedicated to God, and admitted to number with a professedly holy people. Thus the Church being one in all ages, a portion of its members is infant children, who are fully entitled to any external rite, which has been appointed as the symbol of admission to its fellowship, and of participation in its privileges.

5. *Our Lord's commission*, and the practice of the apostles *in baptizing households*, fully authorize the practice of infant baptism. The commission of the Saviour to the apostles, and through them to all the future ministers of his Church, was in these terms: "Go ye therefore, and teach (disciple) all nations, baptizing them in (into) the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."¹ The words in the original might be more forcibly rendered—"Disciple all nations, baptizing them into the name," &c.; and the form of the expression being "baptizing," and not "and baptize," indicates the manner in which the discipling is to be performed—namely, by baptizing. In opposition to Antipædobaptists, who say that infant children are not referred to in the commission, and that they are excluded as not being disciples, and incapable of instruction, we allege that infants are evidently comprised in the "all nations" that are to be taught, as universal usage has always regarded them as a part of the population of a nation, subjects of the sovereign, and under the protection of national law. Again, the opening word in the commission rendered in our version "teach," is different from that in the concluding member, which properly signifies to "indoctrinate," and denotes to "make disciples." Infants may obviously be enrolled as disciples, in being entered in the school of Christ, with a view to their future instruction. It is mere gratuitous assertion, and barefaced dogmatism, to affirm, as Antipædobaptists do, that infants are excluded in the commission, because they cannot be disciples, capable of receiving instruction.²

¹ Matthew xxviii. 19, 20.

² Dr Carson employs more than his usual dogmatism and confidence of assertion, in maintaining that infants are excluded from the commission. "No command," says he, "no explanation can bring unbelievers into the commission that enjoins the baptism of believers. I would gainsay an angel from heaven who should say that this commission may extend to the baptism of any but believers. His assertion would imply a contradiction. Here, then, I stand entrenched, and I defy the ingenuity of earth and hell to drive me from my position." Dr Carson's assertions, for we cannot call them reasoning, would go to prove that the apostolic practice was in opposition to the commission. For Philip baptized Simon Magus, who was an unbeliever. Even Baptists themselves will not pretend to say that

The children of Jewish parents were regarded as disciples of Moses, and were bound by circumcision to keep the whole law. In the New Testament, those are evidently spoken of as *disciples*, belonging to Christ, who are in childhood, as well as those in adult age. "Whosoever shall give to one of these little ones a cup of water in the name of a disciple, shall not lose his reward." ¹ The dispute that led to the assembling of the first Synod in Jerusalem, referred to in Acts xv., had a plain reference to the recognition of infants as disciples. The Judaizers, who contended that Christians under the Gospel should be circumcised, are said "to tempt God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples." ² Now, these did not contend for the circumcision of adults alone, but likewise that their infant children should be circumcised according to the Hebrew usage, from the days of Abraham. Infants, therefore, are included with the disciples, on whose neck the yoke of ceremonial observances was attempted to be put. Nations, therefore, and infants as a component portion of them, are to be disciplined by baptizing them. They are to be enrolled among the scholars of the great Teacher. They are to be openly committed to the tutelage of Him who condescends to be an instructor of babes, entrusted to the guidance and government of the most glorious Master, and declared to be his by the visible symbol of the Christian profession. Baptism, it is true, does not make them disciples, but it recognizes as such those who, from their connection with Christian parents, and their being a part of Christ's Church, stood in this relation before. It is the open badge and seal of their introduction to "wisdom's house," and this the Saviour's commission fully authorizes. A German theologian ³ judiciously remarks, in relation to our Lord's commission embracing infant children, "If Christ, in his command to baptize all ⁴ had wished children to be excepted, He must have expressly said this. For since the first disciples of Christ, as native Jews, knew no other way than for children to be introduced into the Israelitish Church by circumcision, it was natural that they should extend this to baptism, if Christ

all whom they baptize in adult age are real believers. Dr Campbell, a champion of Antipædobaptist doctrine, says, "In nine cases out of ten, through error of judgment, we admit unbelievers." The fact must always be that, as mortal man cannot judge the heart, those who make faith a term of admission to membership in the Church, can never execute the commission in the sense in which Dr Carson interprets it.

¹ Matthew x. 42.

² Acts xv. 10.

³ Knappe's *Theology*, published at Halle.

⁴ Matthew xxviii. 19.

did not expressly forbid it. Had He, therefore, wished that it should not be done, He would surely have said so in definite terms."

The apostles clearly understood the parting command of their Lord and Master, and acted on the acknowledged right of the infant seed of believing parents to be admitted to the seal of initiation. They had been familiar with the usage of having children, as well as parents, consecrated to God by circumcision. They had, moreover, witnessed proselytes and their children baptized together, on being introduced to the congregation of Israel. These practices of long standing must have greatly influenced their views of the nature and extent of their commission, and must have led them to conclude that, under the new economy, *children*, as well as parents, were to be devoted to God in baptism.

The practice of the apostles, and first ministers of the New Testament Church, there is the fullest reason to believe, was in accordance with this view of the initiatory ordinance. It is admitted that the cases of baptism recorded in the Book of Acts are cases of adult baptism; but, without a single exception, the persons baptized were converts from Judaism or heathenism, and such instances prove nothing against infant baptism, as both Baptists and Pædobaptists are equally ready to administer the ordinance to such persons. As well might the opponents of infant baptism argue that the practice of our missionaries with regard to Jew or Gentile, in admitting converts to the Church, is contradictory to our principles, as adduce the adult baptisms of apostolic times as a reason against infant baptism. Besides, the silence of the sacred writers, in relation to the baptism of infants in the days of primitive Christianity, is easily accounted for by the circumstance that children had always been accustomed to be reckoned with their parents in the membership of the Church, and to be enrolled by a visible significant rite. There was no need specially to record the fact of their admission when this took place, according to a practice long established, the *form* of the ordinance of initiation being only changed.

It deserves, however, to be particularly observed, that Anti-pædobaptists cannot produce from the New Testament a single example of such baptism as they practise—that of a child of a professed Christian parent allowed to grow up to adult age without baptism, and baptized on the profession of his own faith in Christ. The cases of adult baptism in primitive times

which they adduce are not in point, since these were of Jewish or Gentile converts, and not of the adult children of Christian parents. There is a plain and obvious reason why the baptism of infants should not be recorded in the inspired history of the primitive Church; but Antipædobaptists will not find it so easy on their principles to account for the fact, that not a single instance of such baptisms as they plead for is recorded in any part of the New Testament.

Referring to *actual* apostolic statement and practice, in relation to baptism, we notice first, the address of Peter to the awakened Jews on the day of Pentecost: "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost; for the promise is to you, and to your children."¹ These words addressed to Jews plainly declare a present interest of children with their parents in the promise; and this is urged as a reason why they should be baptized. It is not said, the promise is to you, and *will be* to your children when they believe; but it is to you, and your children which you now have; it is to them *now*, equally as to you. In virtue of the comprehensive promise, "I will be a God to you and your seed," the parents are entitled to be baptized, and are urged to a participation in the ordinance. On precisely the same ground, their infant children are likewise entitled to the baptismal rite. The interest in the promise is as good a reason why *they* should be baptized as their parents. The promise certainly belonged to the infant seed of Abraham, and thus to the infant children of his spiritual seed. The application of the rite of baptism is co-extensive with the promise. By no proper interpretation of the words, considered as addressed to Jews, can they be taken as referring only to children when they believe. Nor can the last clause, "and to as many as the Lord our God shall call," be taken as a "limitation" of the whole declaration.² The "call" here is not the "effectual call" of the Spirit, but the ordinary call of the Gospel.³ The promise, and with it the

¹ Acts ii. 38.

² This is Dr. Carson's view. "The last clause," says he, "is a limitation of the promise with respect to the three classes mentioned, restricting it to such of each as the Lord shall call."—*Baptism in its Mode and Subjects*, by Alexander Carson, LL.D., p. 204.

³ This is the opinion of Calvin, and other eminent expositors of former times. Olshausen takes a similar view of the passage. Dr Bloomfield, in his *Greek Lexicon*, understands it figuratively of God "calling and inviting men to embrace the Gospel."

ordinance of initiation and confirmation, pertained to Jewish parents and their children; and the apostle declares that the same privilege is secured to believing Gentiles, and their seed, as many as would receive the call of the Gospel, and come into the Gospel-Church state. Thus, then, in the very opening of the new economy, and in the first admission of members to the New Testament Church, consequent upon the outpouring of the Spirit, the right of infants to be baptized was plainly declared.

In the inspired history of the apostolic times, we read of the baptism of families, or *households*, on the profession of their respective heads. It has been observed that we have only *nine* cases of baptism recorded in the Acts and Epistles; and *five* of these have respect to families. Of Lydia it is said, "She was baptized, and her *household*." The Jailer was baptized "he and all his"—*i.e.*, all who belonged to him, "straightway."¹ Cornelius and his household were baptized;² and Paul says, "I baptized the household of Stephanas."³ Now, though we may not be able to prove certainly that there were infants in these families, it can never be shown that there were no infants in them. Under the former dispensation, when families or households joined themselves to the Lord's people, infants were included, and they as well as adults were treated as consecrated to God. The apostles, accustomed to the established usage, may be regarded as speaking of baptizing households, according to the sense in which families had been understood, as including children. These families are mentioned without restriction. It is not said, Lydia was baptized, and those of her family who believed were baptized; but simply, "Lydia was baptized, and her house." And although, in the case of the Jailer, after his baptism and that of his house are recorded, it is added, "He rejoiced, believing in God, with all his house;"⁴ yet this does not imply that all his family believed as well as he; for the participle is in the singular number, and can, therefore, refer only to the Jailer himself. It intimates that, after he believed, he solemnly gave thanks before, and in behalf of his family. The number of *household* baptisms recorded in the New Testament, taken in connection with the Old Testament usage, furnishes a strong presumption in favour of infant baptism. On the principle that infants were baptized with their parents, this

¹ Acts xvi. 15, 33.

² Acts x. 48.

³ 1 Cor. i. 16.

⁴ Πάνοικι πιστοῦντων; τὸ ἑαυτῶν.

summary record is quite natural ; on the principle of Anti-pædobaptists, it cannot be accounted for. For *them* to speak familiarly of baptizing *families*, without stating whether they were all adults and believers, would be inconsistent with their avowed principles and practice. The "Church in the house" includes infant children as well as their parents ; and children are not to be excluded from the salvation which comes into the house, upon the parent, its head, believing in Christ ; and therefore are they entitled to the symbol of a believing profession, and of the confirmation of the promise. Thus the whole apostolic practice is in favour of infant baptism, and in no instance opposed to it ; and this exhibits the proper interpretation and application of the Commission, which embraced children as well as their parents as heirs of the extensive benefits and privileges of Christianity.¹

6. Infants may be partakers of the spiritual and saving benefits which are symbolically exhibited in baptism, and therefore they are entitled to admission to the ordinance.

We have seen that baptism is a compendious exhibition of the great leading blessings of salvation. It impressively teaches the necessity of regeneration, the remission of sins, and spiritual purification through Christ's blood ; separation from the world, communion with Christ and his people, and the enjoyment of eternal life. Now, these benefits of salvation, infants as well as others may certainly enjoy. The judicious Dr Owen asks, in his *Greater Catechism*: "To whom does baptism belong?" and he answers in these comprehensive terms, "Unto all to whom the promise of the covenant is made—that is, to believers and to their seed."² Even those who oppose the practice of infant baptism will hardly refuse to admit that infants may be saved ; and it is only some of the party who push the argument recklessly to its utmost extreme, who hesitate about admitting that children dying in infancy may enjoy eternal felicity. Of some we are expressly told in Scripture, that they were "sanctified from the womb ;" and since salvation is all of grace, and all who become partakers of it are, to all intents, as infants, the passive recipients of its prime

¹ The following passages of Sacred Scripture seem plainly to recognize the practice of infant baptism :—Rom. xi. 16, 17 ; 1 Cor. vii. 14 ; x. 2 ; Gal. iv. A due consideration of the context, and of the design of the inspired writer, will make this obvious.

² *Works*, vol. v. p. 34 ; Russel's edition. He quotes in proof, Acts ii. 39 ; Gen. xvii. 11, 12 ; Acts xvi. 15 ; Rom. iv. 10, 11 ; 1 Cor. vii. 14.

blessings, there is nothing to hinder, but much to encourage, the hope that numbers of this class may have implanted in them the germ of holy principle which shall expand unto life everlasting.¹ Without affirming the salvation of all children who die in infancy, it would yet seem to us to be accordant not only with the declarations of Sacred Scripture, but also with the sanctified feelings of godly parents, that some of this class are heirs of eternal salvation. If, therefore, they enjoy the thing signified, why may they not be admitted to the sign? It is surely inconsistent and preposterous to maintain that they may have the benefits which a deed conveys, and may not have the seal affixed to the document; to affirm that they may be subjects of the kingdom of heaven, and yet be inadmissible to the Church on earth; that they may be heirs of glory, and yet that they may not obtain the distinctive mark of gracious privilege here.

We admit that infants are incapable *of acts of faith*. But if this incapacity disqualifies them for baptism, on the same principle would they be excluded from the enjoyment of all saving benefits. Justification is through faith, and the sanctification of the Spirit is through belief of the truth. The victory that overcomes the world is the conquest of faith, and "the end of faith" is the "salvation of the soul." The principle, therefore, that would exclude infants from baptism would exclude them from heaven. The fundamental doctrine, however, of those who oppose infant baptism is erroneous. Salvation is not of faith, considered merely as an act of the soul, but is of sovereign free grace, of which faith itself is a fruit and effect. Infant children may have the *principle of faith*—spiritual life—implanted, though they are unfit to manifest its actings; and their salvation is as secure, on the footing of the new and well-ordered covenant, as that of others in any subsequent period of life. Children inherit, from their parents, a sinful and polluted nature. In consequence of their being under the taint and guilt of original sin, they are exposed to

¹ It is the sentiment of the late Dr M'Leod of New York, that all the children of believing parents dying in infancy shall be saved. This he argues chiefly from the apostle's declaration in Acts ii. 39, and says their salvation takes place, not in virtue of a natural connection with their parents, but through a gracious connection. The late Dr Russel of Dundee, as well as several other respectable divines, maintain the opinion, that all children dying in infancy shall be saved.—(See Dr M'Leod's *Discourses on the Life and Power of true Godliness*; and Russel on *Infant Salvation*.)

pain, and affliction, and death. The blessings of salvation, with the privileges of the Church to godly parents, remove the curse, mitigate the evils of life, and confer victory in death. If parents may enjoy these, why should they be denied to their infant children, who are as a part of themselves, and in whose deliverance from evil and happiness believing parents must ever feel the deepest concern? There is certainly nothing in the covenant of grace to exclude them; and in the special manifestations of it to Israel of old, little children are expressly embraced as included in the gracious transaction. "Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God; . . . your little ones, and your wives; . . . that *thou shouldst enter into covenant with the Lord thy God.*"¹ So may it still be declared of believing parents and their children. They may enter into covenant with God, and partake together of the benefits of the new covenant—be redeemed from evil, be subjects of renewing and sanctifying grace, and heirs of glory. We do not absolutely say, either that children in infancy are actually regenerated, or that saving blessings are inseparably connected with the outward symbol in baptism. It is but an external sign, and is quite separable and distinct from the thing signified. A baptized person may not be regenerated till long after his early dedication, or may never be regenerated at all. But children, as such, are capable of pardon and regeneration. They may receive the Spirit, and be justified and sanctified, and brought to inherit the kingdom of heaven; and there is every reason to believe that at least a portion of these little ones do enjoy all these inestimable blessings. If these benefits may, or do pertain to them, there is certainly no ground for withholding from them the outward symbol of regeneration and sanctification, the visible seal and confirmation of the title to eternal life. In the language of the apostle, and yet with greater emphasis, as we refer not to a temporary and extraordinary dispensation, but to saving and eternal blessings, we may ask, "Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?"²

Finally. We might adduce the constant usage of the Christian Church from the earliest ages, and throughout the whole course of her past history, as an additional argument in favour of infant baptism.

The testimony of antiquity is full in favour of the practice. The universal Church has observed it; and those who have

¹ Deuteronomy xlix. 10-12.

² Acts x. 57.

denied it have always been regarded as sectarians, and not as persons holding in this article the faith of the Church. The researches of Dr Wall, in his elaborate *History of Infant Baptism*, fully establish this position, and prove that from the days of primitive Christianity till after the commencement of the Reformation in the sixteenth century, not a single individual wrote or spoke against infant baptism, save a small sect in France, in the twelfth century, that speedily disappeared, which denied the possibility of the salvation of infants, and of course denied their right to baptism. A few instances may be quoted to show how clear and decisive is the testimony of the Church in behalf of the baptism of infants:—

Justin Martyr, who flourished within less than half a century of the apostolic age, says, in one of his "Apologies"—"Such persons among us, of sixty and seventy years old, *who were made disciples to Christ from their childhood*, do continue uncorrupt." The term here employed, it is to be remarked, is the same as is employed in the apostolic commission: "Go ye into all the world—disciple all nations." Irenæus, who lived between sixty and seventy years after the apostles, and conversed with Polycarp, who was the disciple of John, says concerning Christ: "He came to save all persons by Himself, who by Him are regenerated unto God—infants, little ones, youths, or elderly persons." It is evident that Irenæus uses the term "*regenerated*" in the sense of being baptized, for he says elsewhere, "When Christ gave his disciples the command of *regenerating* unto God, He said 'Go and teach all nations, baptizing them,'" &c.

Origen, who lived about a hundred years after the apostles, says, "The baptism of the Church is given for the forgiveness of sins. But why are infants, *by the usage of the Church, baptized*, if there is nothing in them that needs forgiveness?" Again, he observes, "The Church had, from the apostles, an order to give baptism to infants; for they to whom the Divine mysteries were committed knew that there was, in all persons, the natural pollution of sin, which must be done away by water and the Spirit."

At a subsequent period, Gregory Nazianzen taught "that infants should be baptized, to consecrate them to Christ in their infancy." Ambrose declared "that the baptism of infants had been the practice of the apostles and of the Church till that time." Chrysostom taught "that baptism had no determinate time, as circumcision had; but one in the bringing

in of life, or one in the middle of it, or one in old age, might receive it."

The celebrated Augustine, in his writings, frequently refers to infant baptism as the standing practice of the Church. In one place he declares that this "is a doctrine held by the Church universal, and that not as instituted by councils, but as delivered by the authority of the apostles alone."¹ In his controversy with Pelagius respecting original sin, Augustine frequently refers to infant baptism as the approved practice of the Church, and asks, "Why are infants baptized for the remission of sins, if they have none?" And it is worthy of remark that Pelagius, though pressed with the argument, never alleges that infant baptism was an unscriptural innovation, or a partial usage of the Church. On the contrary, even though in opposition to the doctrine which he maintained, he bears decided testimony to the existence of infant baptism. Referring to what he regards as a slanderous report that he had denied infant baptism, he asks, "Who can be so impious as to hinder infants from being baptized and born again in Christ?"

The witnesses for Christ, prior to the Reformation, maintained the doctrine, and practised the rite of infant baptism. There is evidence recently brought to light that the "Church in the catacombs" dedicated its infant members to God in baptism; and the same was the usage of the Waldensian Church throughout all periods of its eventful history. Even amidst severe and protracted persecution and suffering, when the light of the blessed Reformation broke upon the different nations of Europe, without any exception, the reformers and Reformed Churches, while purging out superstitious corruptions from the Church, declared the baptism of infants to be the appointment of God, plainly indicated in his Word, and designed to be of perpetual continuance in his Church. The *Harmony of Confessions*, on the subject of infant baptism, forms a noble testimony of the Protestant Churches in behalf of an ordinance, not less consolatory to the hearts of godly Christian parents, than fraught with innumerable and invaluable benefits to the Church. Calvin, in his immortal work, the *Institutes*, has stated and vindicated the right of the infant seed of the members of the Church to the visible seal of God's covenant, with a fulness of statement, and a cogency of reasoning, that have never been surpassed, and that the opponents of infant baptism cannot

¹ See Wall's *History of Infant Baptist*, p. 15. Bucan. *Instit. Theol.*, p. 678.

gainsay or refute. Well might the illustrious reformer say, when summing up his argument in favour of this scriptural rite: "How sweet it is to godly minds to be certified, not only by word, but also by something to be seen with the eyes, that they obtain so much favour with the heavenly Father that He hath care even of their posterity!"

This summary of arguments in behalf of infant baptism cannot better be concluded than in the singular and striking language of Calvin, when refuting the arguments of the opponents of infant baptism in his own day—arguments which are still urged as if they were new, or as if their sophistry and weakness had never been exposed: "This, verily, Satan intends, in assailing with so great armies the baptism of infants, namely, that this testifying of the grace of God being taken away, the promise by which it is present before our eyes may at length by little and little vanish away. Whereupon should grow, not only a wicked unthankfulness toward the mercy of God, but also a certain slothfulness in instructing our children to godliness. For by this spur, we are not a little pricked forward to bring them up in earnest fear of God, and in keeping of his law; when we consider that even immediately from their birth, He taketh and acknowledgeth them for his children. Wherefore, unless we list enviously to darken the bountifulness of God, let us offer to Him our children, to whom He giveth a place to them that are of his family and household—that is to say, the members of the Church."¹

¹ *Instit. Christ. Rel.*, lib. iv. cap. xvi.

CHAPTER V.

THE MODE AND PLACE OF BAPTISM.

SECT. I.—*The Mode.*

ALTHOUGH the controversy respecting the *mode* of administering the ordinance of baptism has been conducted with unusual keenness, and volumes have been written on the subject, we do not consider it necessary, in a treatise like this, to do more than present a brief summary of the reasons why we regard baptism by sprinkling or affusion as the most suitable method, as well as that which fully meets the requirements of Holy Scripture. Indeed, we would never think of having an argument with brethren on this topic, were it not for the dogmatism and pertinacity of those who deny infant baptism, who resolutely maintain that *immersion* is the only proper mode of administering the ordinance; and who do not hesitate to affirm that that is not to be regarded as baptism at all which is dispensed in any other way.¹

The statement of our venerable Westminster divines evidently implies that baptism may be lawfully dispensed by immersion; while, at the same time, it maintains that it is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water on the person. “Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary; but baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water on the person.”² Professing, as we do, the same liberal and catholic sentiment, we are not disposed to quarrel with those who would prefer *dipping* to sprinkling in baptism, did they not labour with all their might to invalidate the mode of baptism which is generally practised by all the Reformed Churches—did they not teach and strenuously argue that, by our method of administra-

¹ It is but justice to observe that several respectable ministers and members of the Baptist Churches in England differ from their brethren in this particular. While they practise immersion and contend for it as, in their view, most scriptural, they yet profess their willingness to regard baptism by affusion or sprinkling as valid.

² *Confession of Faith*, chap. xxviii, sect. iii.

tion, we disobey the requirements of Holy Writ ; and that, in consequence, ours is to be accounted no baptism. While candidly stating the grounds on which we vindicate our own mode of administration as scriptural, we cannot but express regret that Antipædobaptists should adopt the course they have done in speaking or writing on such a subject. To make as the all-important matter whether a smaller or larger quantity of water is to be employed, and, on this ground, to refuse fellowship with those who cannot subscribe a dogma so exclusive, is sufficiently lamentable. The tendency of such a view is, moreover, to turn away attention from the spiritual import and design of the ordinance, by exalting a mere circumstance in the administration, as if it were the entire substance.

Antipædobaptists lay a principal stress upon the original word, which is employed by the sacred writers, and which we translate *baptize*. They contend, with the most confident assertion, that the proper meaning of this term, in its primary sense, in classical Greek writers, and in the Sacred Scriptures, is always to dip or immerse, and that it cannot signify to *pour out* or to *sprinkle*. Even were we to grant what is assumed, that the word, in its primary sense, signifies to dip or plunge, this would by no means settle the question, as every person knows that among all writers, and by usage, words may be more frequently employed in a secondary sense than in that which was primarily attached to them. But it is sufficient merely to state to our readers that every position which Baptists have so dogmatically advanced, respecting the meaning and use of the original word for baptize, has been controverted by the most distinguished scholars, and proof has been offered, which only prejudice and attachment to system could resist, that immersion or dipping is not the exclusive original meaning of the term in question ; and that it is not exclusively employed in this sense by either sacred or profane writers. The illustrious Dr Owen, whose critical powers and profound scholarship will not readily be called in question, declares, " No one instance can be given in Scripture wherein *baptizo* doth necessarily signify either to dip or plunge. It doth not signify properly to dip or plunge ; for that in Greek is *embapto* and *embaptizo*. It nowhere signifies to dip, but as a mode, or in order to washing." * It signifies the " dipping of a finger, or the least touch of the water, and not plunging the whole. It signifies to ' wash ' also, in all good authors." This

* Owen's *Collection of Sermons and Tracts*, vol. xxi. p. 558 ; Russell's edition.

judicious statement plainly teaches what is unquestionably the fact, that "to baptize" primarily signified to wash or wet; and as objects are usually washed-by dipping, this came to be regarded as a frequent though secondary meaning.

Baptizing and dipping are by no means synonymous; the former denotes washing or cleansing, the latter is only used in a modal sense, and has never in our language the secondary meaning of washing.¹ The sacred writers unquestionably employ the original term *bapto*, from which *baptizo* is supposed to be taken, in connections in which it is plainly impossible that it should be explained in the sense of *plunging* or *dipping*. Thus when the Israelites are said to have been "baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Cor. x. 2), the allusion is evidently to the spray of the sea, and the moisture of the cloudy pillar descending on them, or besprinkling them, and not to their being immersed or plunged in the sea. Nebuchadnezzar is said, in Daniel iv. 33, in the Septuagint version, to have his body wet (*εβάφη*) with the dew of heaven, which, it will be admitted, was done by affusion and not by dipping. Referring to a common practice in our Lord's day, the Evangelist Mark says: "The Pharisees and all the Jews, except they wash (*νίψωνται*) their hands often, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from market, except they wash (*βαπτίσωνται*) they eat not. And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the washing (*βαπτισμούς*) of cups and pots, brazen vessels and tables. Then the Pharisees and Scribes asked him, Why walk not thy disciples according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?" Here it is perfectly evident that washing and baptizing are regarded as synonymous in meaning; and washing is baptizing, whether performed by dipping, pouring, or sprinkling. In the Old Testament, we are told that Elisha *poured water* on the hands of Elijah; and thus the Jews were accustomed to wash or baptize before meals, and when they returned from market; whereas to dip or plunge in water so often would not only have been inconvenient but impracticable.

It deserves to be remarked, too, that several of the articles which in this passage are said to have been washed, could not properly be dipped or immersed. The word rendered "tables," in the passage quoted from Mark, properly signifies *beds* or

¹ This position is ably sustained by Dr Beecher of America, in his learned work, entitled, *Baptism, with reference to its Import and Modes.*"

couches, in which persons reclined at meals, and how these could be *baptized* on the principle of immersionists, has never been satisfactorily shown. It is easy to understand how the couches could be purified by sprinkling, but to cleanse them daily by submerging them in water, may simply be pronounced to have been impossible, notwithstanding the confident assertions of Baptist writers.¹

The terms *baptize* and *baptism* are, moreover, frequently used in the Scriptures in a figurative sense, when there would be an obvious incongruity in regarding the mode as being by *dipping*. Thus we read often of the baptism of the Spirit. "Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high."² "I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit on thy seed, and my blessing on thine offspring."³ "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean."⁴ In the New Testament, the fulfilment of these bright predictions is termed the *baptism* and the *shedding forth* of the Spirit. There is an obvious propriety in this figurative manner of expression, as the New Testament ordinance has a pointed reference to the work of the Holy Spirit in moral purification. "John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence."

On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit evidently descended and rested upon the assembled disciples, and they are said to have been thus "filled with the Holy Ghost;" and Peter in his sermon declared that thus was fulfilled the prophecy of Joel: "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." He calls this "shedding forth" the Spirit; and elsewhere, in referring to the same memorable event, he says, "The Holy Ghost fell *on* them as *on* us at the beginning."⁵ In all these instances, and in others that might be quoted, every person must see that to render "baptize with the Spirit," to "dip or immerse in the Spirit," would be incongruous and absurd. Whereas, if the mode of baptism is by sprinkling or affusion, the form of expression is appropriate and significant. If *to baptize* and *to dip*, and *baptism* and *dipping* are, as Baptists affirm, convertible terms, then the one may be plainly substituted for the other. But in many passages of Scripture this would make the language of

¹ Dr Carson, with his usual dogmatism, says, in reference to Mark vii. 4: "Though it were proved that the couches could not be immersed, I would not yield an inch of the ground I have occupied."—*Carson on Baptism*, p. 76.

² Is. xxxii. 15. ³ Is. xlv. 3. ⁴ Ezek xxxvi. 25. ⁵ Acts ii. 17; xi. 15.

the sacred penmen unmeaning and absurd. Thus by supplying the word *dip* or *plunge*, in the following passages:—Mat. iii. 11; 1 Cor. xii. 13; Gal. iii. 27; Luke iii. 3; and reading them, “He shall *dip* you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.” “For by one Spirit are we all dipped into one body.” “Preaching the dipping of repentance,” &c. Every person must at once perceive that the sense is marred, and that the substitution reduces the passages to an absurdity. This follows from regarding the words baptize and baptism as always expressing the *mode*, and not viewing them, as they are very generally used by the sacred writers, to denote *cleansing* or *initiation*, without any reference whatever to the mode of administration. The plain inference from the employment of the terms in question, in the passages quoted, is, that they cannot signify dipping or immersion, and that baptism is properly performed by affusion or sprinkling.

It may be further remarked, that Baptists have never been able to produce a single passage from the Scriptures in which it is clearly proved that any were baptized by immersion. They strenuously argue that *inferential* reasoning is inadmissible in the discussion on baptism, and that positive and express institution is requisite, both in relation to the subjects and the mode of administration. Now, though it is asserted by this party that our Lord positively appointed baptism to be dispensed by immersion, they are forced to employ presumptive reasoning; and they cannot adduce a solitary case, of all the instances of baptism recorded in the New Testament, in which it is clearly apparent that the parties were dipped or immersed. It is not declared that our Lord was immersed when He was baptized, nor that those baptized by the apostles were dipped. It is only inferred or presumed from the meaning which it is alleged the word baptize can alone have, or from the occurrence of such modes of expression, as going *into*, or going down into the water, “coming up out of the water,” and “there was much water there,” &c. We have already referred to the import of the original terms that are employed to designate this ordinance. The conclusion drawn from the expressions to which we have adverted is a mere gratuitous assumption—the foundation is too weak to support the fabric which is attempted to be reared on it. Every Greek scholar knows that the prepositions *εις* and *εἰς*, *in* and *into*, which are used in connection with baptism, denote in innumerable instances *at* or *towards*, and that the preposition *ἐκ* or *ἐξ*, *out of*, signifies *from*. The persons concerned

in the cases of baptism recorded went in the direction of the water, or approached to it, and afterwards they came away from it. When John is said to have baptized at Enon, "because there was much water there," it does not prove that the baptized were dipped. The original words, it has been shown, may be rendered—"There were many waters or rivulets there;" and there is no proof that these were large enough for the purposes of immersion. Besides, the impracticability and indecency of the Baptist dipping the vast numbers who resorted to him must be apparent. In a hot climate, where water is so valuable and necessary an element, there is an obvious propriety in the scriptural record, that there was a plentiful supply of water for the multitudes who resorted to his preaching and baptism. The case of the Ethiopian eunuch has been appealed to, as proving baptism by immersion, because it is said he and Philip *went down into the water, and came up out of it.*¹ But here the Greek particles only mean, they left the road and descended to the water, and afterwards came away *from* it. According to the mode of exposition adopted by Baptist writers, Philip, as well as the eunuch, must have gone down bodily into the water, and been baptized too, for it is said in express terms, "They went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch."²

The passage in Romans vi. 3, though frequently appealed to by Baptist writers, as a convincing proof that baptism is by immersion, has no connection whatever with this point. The apostle says, "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" But here he is evidently referring to the spiritual meaning of the ordinance, as importing union to Christ; for burial with Christ in baptism is spoken of as equivalent to grafting or planting into Christ. Nothing whatever is declared respecting the mode; and even were there, the analogy would not hold, as our Lord was not let down into a grave or pit in the earth, as we bury, but laid in a sepulchre, into which persons are said to have

¹ Dr Lardner remarks judiciously on this passage: "I do not see any proof that the eunuch was baptized by immersion. He and Philip went out of the chariot to the water, and stood in the water, and Philip poured some of the water upon him. To be baptized in the chariot was unbecoming the solemnity of the ordinance. It was proper to go out and stand, and make a solemn profession of faith, and be instructed by Philip. All the reasonings of Mr B. and others for immersion, taken from the eunuch's getting out of the chariot, have appeared to me inconclusive, not to say weak and trifling; nor do I see reason to think that John the Baptist used immersion, but rather otherwise."
² Acts viii. 38.

gone, and into which they did not need to descend; and as, in truth, He had not proper burial at all, for the Sabbath intervened, and He had triumphantly risen from the dead when the disciples came to perform for Him the accustomed funeral rites.¹

The cases of apostolic baptism, recorded in the book of Acts, may be easily shown to be incompatible with the mode of immersion. Thus, on the day of Pentecost, to baptize *three thousand* by dipping them, in a thronged city, without any previous preparation, in presence of a promiscuous multitude of both men and women, must have been out of the question; and had even all the apostles taken part in the administration, the time required for the performance of the rite would have far exceeded that which the sacred narrative assigns to the whole assembly on the occasion.² The baptism of Paul by

¹ This passage is ably illustrated, and the gratuitous and groundless assumptions of Baptist writers exposed, in *An Essay on Baptism: being an Inquiry into the Meaning, Form, and Extent of the Administration of that Ordinance*, by the Rev. Greville Ewing, pp. 110, 139. The remarks of Dr Owen on the same passage are profound and judicious—"The apostle," he says (Rom. vi. 3-5), "is dehorting from sin, exhorting to holiness and new obedience, and gives this argument, from the necessity of it, and our ability for it, both taken from our initiation into the virtue of the death and life of Christ, expressed in our baptism: that by virtue of the death and burial of Christ we should be dead unto sin, sin being slain thereby; and by virtue of the resurrection of Christ we should be quickened unto newness of life, as Peter declares (1 Peter iii. 21). Our being *buried* with Him, and our being planted together in the likeness of his death, and likeness of his resurrection, is the same with *our old man being crucified with Him* (ver. 6), and the destroying of the body of sin, and our being raised from the dead with Him, which is all that is intended in the place. There is not one word, nor one expression, that mentions any resemblance between dipping under water and the death and burial of Christ; nor one word that mentions a resemblance between our rising out of the water and the resurrection of Christ. Our being buried with Him by baptism into death (ver. 4), is our being planted together in the likeness of his death (ver. 5). Our being planted together in the likeness of his death, is not our being dipped under water, but the crucifying of the old man (ver. 6). Our being raised up with Christ from the dead, is not our rising from under the water, but our walking in newness of life (ver. 4), by virtue of the resurrection of Christ (1 Peter iii. 21). That baptism is not a sign of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, is clear from hence; because an instituted sign is a sign of the *Gospel grace participated, or to be participated*. If dipping be a sign of the burial of Christ, it is not a sign of a Gospel grace participated, for it may be where there is none, nor any exhibited."—*Infant Baptism and Dipping*, Works, vol. xxi. p. 559; Russel's edition.

² "It has been computed that had Peter continued baptizing for six hours without intermission, according to the system of immersion, he would have administered the rite to about 90 persons."—Dr M'Crie's *Lectures on Infant Baptism*, p. 37. At this rate, it would have required the whole number of the apostles several days to baptize 3000 persons.

Ananias, it is every way probable, was in a private house. From his previous agitation of mind, and three days' fasting, he was in no proper state of body to be immersed, and the natural drift of the narrative would seem to imply that he received the rite by the simple affusion of water, and not by dipping. The jailer and his household were baptized probably at midnight in his own house; and there is not the smallest ground to conclude, either that he had any provision in his house for immersion, or that he went forth to a water within or outside the city for this purpose. In like manner, we know nothing of a baptistery in the house of Cornelius. The question of the apostle, "Can any man forbid water?" would seem to imply that water was brought to the company, into the place of assembly, not that they went forth to it; and the Scripture phrase, "the Holy Ghost fell *upon* them that were baptized," has, as it appears to us, an obvious reference to the mode of baptism by sprinkling and not by immersion. Thus, the probability in every instance is in favour of baptism by affusion, and is opposed to the practice of immersion or dipping. We admit this is not direct and positive proof; but, in the absence of the least hint that immersion was the method resorted to in these primitive baptisms, the considerations which we have mentioned furnish a strong presumption that the simple mode of sprinkling was employed, and not a method of administration which, if not in the cases mentioned absolutely impracticable, was, at least, inconvenient and unsuitable.

As direct arguments why baptizing by the sprinkling or affusion of water is to be preferred to immersion, we offer the following:—

1. The due administration of an ordinance *does not depend on the quantity* of the outward element employed. In the other sacrament of the New Testament, it is generally held that a small portion of the bread and wine are sufficient as symbols of the spiritual provision on which worthy communicants feed by faith. The Apostle Paul, in writing to the Corinthian Church, exposes and condemns the abuse that carnalized and degraded a holy institution by the partakers eating and drinking to excess. When Peter, instructed by our Lord in the spiritual design of washing his disciples' feet, cried out, in the fervour of affection, "Not my feet only, but likewise my hands and my head," the Saviour's expressive reply was, "He that is washed"—that is, he who has only one of his members washed, and a small quantity of water applied for this purpose—"needeth not, save to wash his feet, but is clean every

whit.”¹ This plainly imported that full spiritual cleansing is symbolized by the application of a small portion of water to a part of the body, and that it is nowise necessary, either that a large quantity of the purifying element should be used, or that the whole body should be immersed in it. Whether, therefore, we consider the one sacrament or the other, or refer to the spiritual import of the outward element, it is obviously of no moment whether much water is used in baptism, or only so much as is sufficient for sprinkling a part of the body. Reasoning from analogy, the danger of abuse would seem to be rather connected with the employment of a large quantity than otherwise. The judicious Witsius properly remarks: “The communion in the thing signified should not be rated by the quantity of the external sign. A little drop of water may no less seal the abundance of Divine grace in baptism, than a small morsel of bread, and a sparing draught of wine, in the Holy Supper.”²

2. The *spiritual import* of the ordinance is as fully represented by sprinkling as by any other mode, and *spiritual purification is*, in the Scriptures, most frequently thus represented. Baptism, we have already seen, declares the necessity of regeneration and sanctification of the nature, and is expressive of the scriptural method of moral renovation. Now, sprinkling as a symbol may quite as fully indicate this important design as immersion. It represents washing as fully, and is, moreover, more appropriate as a symbol to the farther idea of the washing of regeneration. In the Scriptures, the figurative expression *sprinkling*, and kindred terms, are continually employed to denote spiritual purification. The Levites of old were purified and dedicated to their office by “sprinkling upon them water of purifying.”³ Ancient seers predicted the redemption that

¹ John xiii. 10.

² *Witsii Econ. Fœd.*, lib. iv. c. 16, 30. The argument from analogy for employing but a small quantity of water in baptism is handled in a very lucid and satisfactory manner in a *Dissertation on the Nature and Administration of the Ordinance of Baptism*, by the Rev. W. Sommerville, A.M., Cornwallis, Nova Scotia. Mr S. is a missionary from the Reformed Presbyterian Church in this country in the British North American Colonies, and is well known as a distinguished scholar and original thinker. We would much wish to see his *Dissertation* reprinted, and widely circulated in these countries; and likewise, that the esteemed author could find leisure from his engrossing avocations to publish soon the Second Part on the “Subjects of Baptism.” — This has been done since the first edition of this Treatise was issued. The second part of the *Dissertation* contains a full and able discussion of the doctrine of Infant Baptism, and sets aside the evasions and objections of Antipædobaptists.

³ Numbers viii. 6, 7.

is through Christ, employing the same metaphor. "So shall He sprinkle many nations." "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean."¹ Under the new economy, the fulfilment of these predictions is described by similar phraseology. "Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water." "We are come to the blood of sprinkling."² "Through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ."³ *Pouring* and *shedding forth* are used figuratively to express the mode of communicating the same blessings. Thus it is said, "He shall pour it (the oil) all on the head of him that is to be cleansed." And Peter declares, in reference to the promised baptism by the Holy Ghost, "He hath shed forth this which ye now see."⁴

It is manifest from these passages, and many others that might be quoted, that moral purification is denoted by the figurative terms employed; and therefore are we warranted to conclude that baptism, which represents the renovation of heart and life, is properly administered by sprinkling or affusion. When Baptists sneer, as they frequently do, at the act of sprinkling, it behoves them to reflect that they thus turn into contempt what the Spirit of truth himself has sanctioned. The remarks of the excellent Dr Owen on this topic exhibit at once his deep sagacity and profound reverence for Holy Scripture: "This rite, or way of sprinkling, was chosen of God as an expressive token or sign of the effectual communication of the benefits of the covenant to them that are sprinkled (and infants were among them). Hence, the communication of the benefits of the death of Christ unto sanctification is called "the sprinkling of blood" (Heb. xii. 24). And I fear that some who have used the expression with some contempt, when applied by themselves unto the sign of the communication of the benefits of the death of Christ in baptism, have not observed that reverence of holy things that is required of us. For this symbol of SPRINKLING was that which God himself chose and appointed as a meet and apt token of the communication of covenant mercy—that is, of his grace in Christ Jesus unto our souls."⁵

3. The grand blessing of the new dispensation, *the communication of the Holy Spirit*, is generally declared to be conferred in

¹ Isaiah lii. 15; Ezekiel xxxvi. 25.

³ 1 Peter i. 2.

² Hebrews x. 22; xii. 24.

⁴ Leviticus xiv. 18; Acts ii. 33.

⁵ *Exposition of the Hebrews*, vol. iii. p. 435, fol.

the way of sprinkling or pouring out. The communication of the Spirit is figuratively called "the baptism of the Spirit;" and this would seem plainly to imply that there is a close resemblance between the mode of dispensing the ordinance and the manner of becoming partakers of that great blessing. By Isaiah it is predicted, "I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed;" and again, "Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high;"¹ Zechariah, "I will pour upon the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and supplication;"² and Joel, "I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh."³ On the day of Pentecost, these last predictions were accomplished by the *descent* of the Spirit, and not by the disciples being dipped or immersed in the Spirit. The Apostle Peter expressly declares that this was the fulfilment of the Saviour's promise about the baptism of the Spirit, and likewise of the prophecy of Joel. Immersion in water is surely not in keeping with the language employed by the sacred writers. If the grand leading idea in the promise is, as has been judiciously observed, that "the blessing of the Spirit is received by us," it is requisite, in order that there may be any proper resemblance between baptism and the communication of the Spirit, that "*the water should be applied to the person, and not the person applied to the water.*"⁴

Lastly. The mode of sprinkling is *accordant with the simplicity of Gospel ordinances*, and is *adapted to all places and circumstances*, while the method of immersion is, in many cases, *inapplicable and impracticable*. The Divine institution of ordinances is characterized by remarkable simplicity. The spiritual import and blessing are presented as the grand matter; and outward circumstances as to mode, or the quantity of the material element to be used, are regarded as of comparatively little importance. Thus, a small portion of the ordinary bread of the country, and of the wine in common use, are, in the Lord's Supper, set apart as symbols of the body and blood of Christ. In like manner, the affusion of a few drops of water in baptism as effectually represents the spiritual blessings intended, as plunging in a pond or bath, while it is much the simpler method of applying the purifying element. The mind, too, is directed more to the spiritual import of the ordinance, than when much water is used, and the whole body immersed.

The celebration of the rite in this manner is, like our holy

¹ Isa. xlv. 3; xxxii. 15.

³ Joel ii. 28.

² Zech. xii. 10.

⁴ M'Crie's *Lectures on Infant Baptism*, p. 47.

religion itself, adapted to all places—the thronged city, and the country, or the desert; the sunburnt regions, where water is rare, and the cold northerly climate—and to all classes, the tender infant, as well as the aged convert, or the person enfeebled by sickness and disease. The practice of immersion, on the contrary, must, in some cases, be simply impracticable, as in tropical countries, where water is scarce, and at some seasons entirely wanting in extensive districts; while in others, it is hardly consistent with decency; and in others, it must be injurious to health, if not even endangering the life. When these things are duly considered, it must be apparent that the argument for immersion is at once weak and inconclusive. To plead for a practice as essential to the ordinance of baptism which is destitute of scriptural warrant, which is not easily reconcilable with the import and design of the institution, and which is unfit for universal use, and incompatible, in any degree, with health and public decency, and, on this ground, to break fellowship in the Church, is surely opposed to the genius of Christianity, and contrary to the spirit of the Gospel. We bewail and condemn whatever would cause schisms and divisions in the body of Christ; and while we stand upon our Gospel liberty, and plead for what exhibits the simplicity and spirituality of the ordinance, we desire to do all things in charity; and we do not therefore refuse to own, as of one body, and Lord, and baptism, those who follow a different mode of administration, provided they do not voluntarily separate themselves from the communion of the Church universal, and repudiate the fellowship of those who cannot receive their dogmas, or accept as proofs their confident and unsupported assertions.

SECT. II.—*The place of administering Baptism.*

The proper place for the administration of baptism is that of the public assembly of the Church for religious worship. This would seem even to be implied in the terms of the original commission: “Go, teach and baptize,” as the ordinance is not connected with private instruction, but with public teaching. The nature and design, too, of the institution require that it should not be dispensed in private, but in the house of God, and in the public assemblies of the Church. It is the badge of a public profession of the religion of Christ; it is an open joining of the subject of baptism to the Lord’s people, and a

recognition, on the part of the Church, of one who has been added to its fellowship and admitted to its privileges. By its birth, the infant becomes a member of the family; in baptism it is publicly enrolled in "the household of faith." It virtually takes the vow of membership, is presented to the brotherhood of the Church, and recommended to the prayers and instructions of the faithful. The Church collective becomes a party in the act of incorporation; and if pledges are tendered on the part of the newly-dedicated member, pledges are likewise given by the office-bearers and brethren that they will faithfully contribute their part to accomplish the design of the solemn dedication. These ends evidently cannot be answered by dispensing the ordinance in a manner unknown to the Church, or by a surreptitious admission. The illustrious Calvin declares, that "this sacrament which introduces us into the Church, and is a sign of our adoption, cannot validly be dispensed except in the public assembly of believers. Private baptism," he adds, "agrees neither with the ordinance of God nor the practice of the apostles."

Whether we consider the benefit of the person to be baptized, or the edification and communion of the Church itself, the administration of the ordinance should be public—in the assembly for worship, and not in the family or in private. An engagement is tendered on behalf of the infant dedicated to God by baptism, that it shall be trained in the way it should go, and brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. When this vow is solemnly made in the assembly of the Church, and ratified in the house of God, in acts of public worship, we have a much fuller guarantee for its faithful observance than if it were made in private. God himself is said to delight "in the gates of Zion" more than "the dwellings of Jacob;" and not only is the sanctuary the appointed place of peculiar blessing, but the prayers and lively interest of the members of the Church sought, and virtually tendered, in behalf of the baptized entrant into fellowship, are benefits of great value, and not to be fully enjoyed elsewhere.

Besides, the Church itself derives no inconsiderable advantage from the public administration of baptism. It thereby enjoys the full benefit of its two sacraments, which, like the spouse's "two breasts," display its spiritual beauty, and minister spiritual nourishment. Baptism publicly dispensed is a valuable means of instruction and edification. It presents, in the most affecting and impressive manner, the doctrine of man's ruin

and depravity, and of the way of recovery through Christ ; it illustrates the wonderful compassion and condescension of the Saviour, and presses the Gospel of the grace of God upon the acceptance of all. It exhibits and enhances the fellowship of the Church, and supplies the most powerful motives to the faithful performance of the duties involved in Christian communion. The members of the Church, younger and older, are reminded of their own solemn vows, and are excited to consider and renew their engagement to be the Lord's. When the ordinance is faithfully administered in the presence of a congregation of spiritual worshippers, no service can have a more powerful tendency to impress the heart aright, and to excite to holy dispositions, and to the faithful performance of the duties which the communion of saints demands.

On the other hand, the private administration of baptism is followed by injurious consequences to all concerned. It encourages low and superstitious views on the part of parents ; it leads to the neglect of proper religious instruction, and countenances or connives at the want of due preparation for attending upon the holy ordinance, and is thus a profanation of the sacrament. In many cases, where baptism is dispensed privately, the parents are either utterly ignorant of the nature and design of the ordinance, or living in irreligion and immorality ; while in others, pride, and a criminal feeling of shame, and a low, unworthy view of the privileges of the Church, hinder from renewing a profession by the baptismal covenant, or appearing for this purpose in the public assemblies of the Church. The Church itself, by the practice of private baptism, is deprived of one of the sacraments, and of weighty and impressive instructions on subjects of the highest importance. Acquaintance with its infant members is prevented, and prayerful interest in the lambs of the flock is not felt ; nor is there due security given or received that the youth of the Church shall be brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Thus the Church is robbed of several of her most valuable privileges ; and the grand motives and incitements to the discharge of several important duties, which are connected with her highest functions in the world, are virtually taken away. When, as in many instances where private baptism is practised, the ordinance is degraded by a minister dispensing it to please respectable persons, as an appendage to a convivial entertainment, the sacrament is prostituted to the most unworthy purposes, and no blessing may be expected to follow

its administration. It is matter of painful observation, that error in doctrine of the most serious kind has advanced, in connection with the private administration of baptism; while other baleful fruits of this practice have been a total abandonment of scriptural discipline in the Church, and the general neglect of all family religion.¹

The best sections of the Reformed Church, in the purest times, have been aware of the abuses of *private baptism*, and in their published formularies, and by the writings of their most distinguished men, have laboured to secure the administration of this seal of the covenant, in accordance with our Lord's command, and with apostolic practice. Ecclesiastical historians have shown that, in the age immediately succeeding the apostles, before corruption extensively pervaded the Church, baptism was administered in the presence of the assembly convened for public worship. Justin Märtyr says, "The congregation, with great fervency, poured out their souls in common and united prayers, both for themselves and for the persons baptized, and for all others, all the world over." The "Directory for Worship," contained in the *Westminster Confession*, as adopted by the Church of Scotland, declares: "Baptism is not to be administered in private places, or privately, but in the place of public worship, and in the face of the congregation, where the people may most conveniently see and hear." This was in accordance with all the former faithful contendings and scriptural attainments of the covenanted Reformed Church of Scotland. In the earliest period of the Reformation, under the illustrious Knox, it was appointed (1556), "That as the sacraments are not ordained of God to be used in private corners as charms, but left to the congregation, therefore the infant to be baptized shall be brought to the Church." In the *First Book of Discipline* (prepared in 1562), it is declared that "baptism may be administered

¹ While it is admitted that, in some special cases—such as in times of persecution, and when the health of parent or child would be seriously endangered by attending upon the ordinance in the place of public worship—baptism may be elsewhere administered, it should, in every instance, be dispensed in connection with teaching from the Word, and in presence of members of the Church, who are notified and encouraged to attend upon the occasion of the administration. We have known instances, even where a testimony is borne for public baptism, and for the purity of ordinances, in which the witnesses were limited to a party invited to a convivial entertainment. We cannot regard this otherwise than a perversion of a holy ordinance, which ought never to be countenanced by ministers and office-bearers of the Church.

wherever the Word is preached, but it is most expedient that it be ministered upon a Sabbath, or upon the days of prayer, to make the people have a greater reverence to the administration of the sacraments than they have." The Church of Scotland, when its liberty of action was unimpeded, ever discovered a laudable concern to discountenance private baptism. Thus in 1580, the General Assembly censured a minister for "baptizing privately;" and in the following year, another minister was suspended for the same offence; and the Assembly ordained "that the sacrament (of baptism) should not be administered in private houses." When, at the memorable Perth Assembly in 1618, private baptism, with other prelatical and superstitious observances were enacted, and were afterwards, by oppressive civil authority, forced upon the Church of Scotland, faithful men went into banishment, and voluntarily chose diversified privations and sufferings, rather than defile their consciences by adopting unscriptural usages.

At the commencement of the Second Reformation, in the celebrated Assembly of 1638, prelatical corruptions were condemned and swept away, and private baptism among the number. In subsequent times, the Church of Scotland, in its public acts, has discovered a jealous concern about preserving the purity of the ordinance, by maintaining its public administration. One instance, among a number that might be adduced, may suffice to show this watchful care. The Assembly of 1690 "discharged the administration of baptism in private—that is, in any place, or at any time when the congregation is not ordinarily called together to wait on the dispensing of the Word." The following weighty reasons are assigned for this enactment: "Those who receive the sacraments are solemnly devoted to God before angels and men: *they are solemnly received as members of the Church, and do enter into communion with her.*" And it is added, "By the private use of the sacraments, the superstitious opinion is nourished that they are necessary to salvation—not only commanded duties, but as means without which salvation cannot be attained."¹

The other Reformed Churches were equally careful to provide for the public dispensation of baptism. Bishop Burnet says that the Church of England, at the Reformation, judged it expedient to "have all baptisms done in the Church, and permitted the other only in cases of necessity." The Reformed Church of France declares that "no baptism shall be adminis-

¹ Acts of Assembly, 1690.

tered but in Church assemblies, or where there is a formed public Church." The Church of Geneva enacted: "No baptism shall be celebrated but in the ecclesiastical assemblies, immediately after sermon." In Holland, it was ordained "that private baptism should not be used, except in cases of persecution." Thus the concurrent testimony of the Churches of the Reformation is uniform in favour of the sacrament of baptism being dispensed in the public assemblies of the Church; and not only the authorized symbols of these Churches, but many eminent reformers and divines connected with them, have declared private baptism to be opposed to scriptural requirement and apostolic practice, and to be a dangerous innovation.

With such an array of important testimonies and of cogent reasons in favour of public baptism, should not all who are concerned for the purity and advancement of the Church of Christ, ministers and people, plead for a practice which the nature and design of the institution demand, not less than Scripture precept and usage? and, on the same ground, should not the private administration of baptism, through whatever motives, or by whatever pretext it is urged, be steadfastly resisted? Indeed, a proper consideration of the circumstances in which Christian parents dedicate their children to God in baptism, pleads so strongly in favour of public baptism, that we might appeal to the sanctified feelings of all right-minded members of the Church in support of the views which we have advanced. Were it put to the choice of an intelligent godly parent whether he would receive the ordinance for his child in private, or in the public assembly of the Church, we are persuaded he would not hesitate to prefer the latter; and only from ignorance, or low and mistaken views of the nature and design of the ordinance, will any professing Christians be found to seek the dispensation of baptism in private.

What more solemn and impressive rite, than the baptism of an infant child, in the presence of the congregation of God's people! It is an act of dedication of an immortal being to God, the author of life, the fountain of all blessing. The parent is a deeply interested party, as he herein renews his own personal covenant, and surrenders up his child to Him who can alone protect, sustain, and bless him. The highest interests of a young immortal are deeply concerned in the solemn transaction. The baptismal engagement will either be a means to him of

¹ Canon vi. Of Baptism. Quick's *Synodicon*.

enjoying the highest blessings, or, if afterwards left to depart from God, of aggravated condemnation. By nature, the infant is a fallen, guilty, polluted human being, as he is utterly unable to deliver himself from this ruined condition, or to resist the innumerable evils with which he is surrounded in entering on life's devious, troublous course. With what intense interest must a Christian parent regard the period of the public dedication of his offspring to God, the time in which he receives the badge of a holy Christian profession ! How anxiously must he desire, at such a season, the prayers of God's people in behalf of himself and his child ; and how grateful and supporting to him must be the thought, in retiring from the solemn scene, and the reflection afterwards, that his little one has been publicly enrolled in the household of faith, and that he can certainly calculate upon the earnest prayers of the people of God being enlisted in its behalf ! To overlook or neglect such distinguished privileges betrays, on the one hand, a criminal insensibility to the condition of a child, and to the evils to which it is exposed ; and, on the other, to the invaluable blessings which are connected with the fellowship of the saints, and which constitute an inheritance among them that are sanctified.

The following judicious remarks on public baptism, by the excellent Archbishop Usher, one of the most illustrious prelates that ever adorned the Episcopal bench, and of whom the Irish Church may justly be proud, are so weighty and apposite, that we cannot refrain from introducing them at the conclusion of this plea for the purity and efficiency of a solemn ordinance :—"Baptism is a visible admittance of thy child, if thou be-est a parent, into the congregation of Christ's flock, signifying its interest in the heavenly Jerusalem, which is above. Is this a business to be mumbled over in a corner ? Christ came from Galilee to Jordan to be baptized. Is the receiving of thy child into the bosom of the Church in a full congregation no comfort to thee ? Is it not mercy to see the blood of Christ ministering sealed up unto thy infant, to purge it from that pollution which it has brought into the world with it ; which also thou makest confession of by presenting it to this mystical washing ? Is it not joy to thy heart to hear the whole congregation of God's saints pray for thy child ; and that God has honoured thee so much as to count thy very child holy and within his covenant ? Think on these things. Every one that is present at baptism should consider that that being a public action of the congregation, every particular person ought

reverently to join in it. Shall the whole Trinity be present at baptism (Mat. iii.), and we be gone? Join ought every one in prayer for the infant; join in praises to God for his mercy that we and our children are brought forth, and brought up within the pale of his Church (whereas the rest of the world are like a wilderness), and thank God for adding at the present a member to his Church. Join every one ought in meditation of the pollution of nature, of the blessed means of redemption by Christ, of the happy benefits that God seals up unto us in our baptism, even before we know them, of the vows and promises which we in our childhood made by those who were undertakers for us; and finding our failings every time we are present at baptism, we should renew our covenant with God, and labour to get new strength to close with his promises, which, in our baptism, He made unto us. Thus, if we were wise to make a right use of it, we might learn as much at a baptism as at a sermon." ¹

¹ Archbishop Usher *On the Uses of Public Baptism*, quoted by Bickersteth, *Treatise on Baptism*, p. 218.

CHAPTER VI.

PREPARATION FOR BAPTISM BY CHRISTIAN PARENTS— DISPOSITIONS SUITABLE TO ITS ADMINISTRATION.

GOD early and impressively proclaimed the manner in which He is to be approached in holy ordinances. "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified."¹ This is still the standing law of the house of God. He is "greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about Him."² While, in all ordinances, holy fear and devout reverence should characterize religious worshippers, those which may be regarded as the highest and most sacred institutions of Christianity—the seals of the covenant—should be approached with peculiar solemnity, and with a frame of mind corresponding to the nature and importance of the service, to the spiritual benefits expected from its performance, and to the weighty obligations which it involves.

It is generally admitted to be a gross profanation to partake of the Lord's Supper in a rash and hasty manner, without due preparation. The very formula of institution appears to imply, as indispensable to a right participation, solemn previous preparation. "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat," &c. And not only the practice of our Lord and his apostles, but the profession also of almost all sections of the Church, declares an unprepared approach to this sacrament to be presumptuous sinning;—not only unproductive of any real benefit to the participant, but fraught with fearful danger.

Although there is reason to fear that, from low views of the nature and design of the other sacrament, and from the unfaithfulness of those who dispense it, numbers come to it destitute of due solemnity, ignorant of the necessity of special preparation, and unconcerned about making it, yet is such preparation equally important and beneficial in partaking of baptism as in coming to the Lord's Supper. The gracious presence of the King of

¹ Leviticus x. 3.

² Psalm lxxxix. 7.

Zion is assured to faithful ministers in baptizing, equally as in preaching the Word, and should be earnestly sought and expected, and should be reflected on with reverence and godly fear. Those who came to the baptism of John at Jordan "confessed their sins,"¹ and this implied reflection, humiliation, self-examination, and prayer. The awakened on the day of Pentecost were bid to "repent and be converted." Saul was enjoined by Ananias to "rise and be baptized, washing away his sins." The eunuch, when baptized by Philip, was instructed, as indispensable to receiving the solemn rite, of the need of "believing with all his heart;" and in the apostolic practice generally, the converts baptized are described as being "pricked in their hearts," crying out, with earnestness, What shall we do? as having "gladly received the Word," and being made "partakers of the Holy Ghost."²

Now, substantially the same preparation is required still to a right participation in the baptismal seal of the covenant. Although it is admitted that the instances referred to were cases of adult baptism, and infants cannot give the same evidence of faith and repentance, yet this does not render the less necessary a proper spiritual state of mind in those who claim the ordinance as a privilege to themselves and their offspring. It cannot be regarded as less than presumptuous sin to partake of a seal of the covenant, ignorant of its nature, and without faith in the spiritual mysteries which it exhibits, and a real, heartfelt desire after the blessings which it is designed to communicate. Parents require to have knowledge of Divine things and spiritual affections for themselves, and they require the exercise of grace in connection with the dedication of their children to God. It is true that the blessing in baptism is not absolutely conferred because of the faith of parents; yet, when it comes, it is generally in this way. There is a *gracious*, though not a *necessary* connection between the faith of a parent exercised in the act of baptismal consecration, and the spiritual blessing upon the child, whether conferred at the time, or enjoyed afterwards. On these grounds, Christian parents, like those who came to the Saviour while on earth, in behalf of their children, should be concerned to approach in baptism in a right frame of spirit. Viewing the service as unspeakably important to themselves and to their little ones, whom they present to God, they should aim to come to it with special preparation of heart, putting away from them whatever is

¹ Matthew iii. 6.

² Acts ii. 37, 41; x. 47.

inconsistent with the holy solemnity, and cherishing dispositions of mind befitting the enjoyment of the blessing desired. The preparation requisite for receiving the ordinance of baptism consists in—

1. *Serious meditation and self-examination.* In every instance of drawing near to God, we should solemnly consider the character of the glorious Being with whom we have to do. We should think seriously on the spiritual objects exhibited, ponder the nature of the service required, and reflect upon our own character and the state of our hearts, when engaging in its performance. To the people of Israel, as they stood at the base of the mount, it was said by Moses, in the act of sprinkling the blood of the victims, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words."¹ The immediate preparation for the observance of the Lord's Supper is enjoined in the command: "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread." Self-scrutiny is equally necessary towards a right participation of the sacrament of initiation. In baptism we come to take hold on God's covenant, to profess reliance on the Saviour and his merits for all blessings to ourselves and to those who are to us objects of the dearest interest, to join ourselves to the Lord's people, and to dedicate ourselves and our children to be wholly the Lord's. We publicly declare that we renounce every other service, and all other grounds of dependence. In the solemn transaction we have to do with the vast concerns of God's glory, and with the interests of immortal souls for eternity. It seriously concerns us to see that we have duly considered these important matters, and that we are acquainted with the way of acceptance. We approach an ordinance which may either be a signal means of blessing to ourselves and others, or which, if profaned by an inconsiderate and unhallowed observance, must be fraught with imminent danger. "If we regard iniquity in our heart, the Lord will not hear us."² The person who does not meditate on such things, and who does not weigh the question of his fitness to approach this ordinance, must be in a state far from safety. His ignorance and thoughtlessness betray a heart unchanged, and the prevailing power of unbelief within. He provokes God, profanes a holy ordinance, and may not expect the blessing to himself and others. On the other hand, serious meditation and self-examination may tend to discover the real

¹ Exodus xxiv. 8.

² Psalm lxxvi. 18.

state of the heart and life, and may lead him to apply for the blessing which is never denied to them that humbly seek it.

2. *Due consideration of the truths, privileges, and obligations held forth in the ordinance.* It is sad to come in contact with the truths of revelation without feeling their momentous nature and importance, and to be presented with high privileges without a due estimate of their value. To be brought under solemn obligations to duty, and yet not to feel a sense of responsibility, betrays a state of conscience at once degraded and revolting. In no position is this insensibility more criminal than in coming unprepared to the sacraments. Those who partake of the Lord's Supper, without *discerning the Lord's body*, are declared to "eat and drink damnation," or judgment, to themselves. This *discernment* implies some measure of knowledge of the great truths connected with the character, mission, and work of the Redeemer, and a spiritual acquaintance with their influence on the heart and life. By analogy, we infer that it is most dangerous to come inconsiderately to the other sacrament without reflection on the truths and privileges which it exhibits, and without a feeling of the solemn and weighty obligations which it imposes.

Baptism, we have already shown,¹ embodies an epitome of the great truths connected with the work of Christ, and the momentous affair of human redemption. It holds forth impressively the evil and demerit of sin, the necessity of pardon and moral purification to the enjoyment of happiness, a perfect atonement provided, deliverance from condemnation, the moral renovation of the nature by the agency of the Spirit, fellowship with the family of God, and all the weighty and affecting obligations to holiness which are furnished by the cross of Christ, the enjoyment of special and high privileges, and the professed dedication of the person to God and his service.

Right preparation for coming to such an ordinance must, in the nature of the case, imply that these great truths are duly considered in their vast magnitude and importance, believed on in the heart, and embraced as principles to purify the mind, and influence the life and conduct. We are justified, regenerated, and sanctified by the knowledge of the truth, and all the saving operations of the Spirit are conducted through the same instrumentality. In no position can a rational, immortal being be placed more favourable for the contemplation of Divine

truths, than when these are not only addressed to the ear, but exhibited also in embodied action. If this opportunity of studying them and receiving impressions from them be neglected, it can hardly be expected that, in any other case, they will be received so as to exercise a salutary, spiritual influence. On the other hand, it is not less our duty than our privilege to ponder deeply these vital truths, and to surrender ourselves to their influence, when we approach to an ordinance which most vividly exhibits them.

Every separate truth should be made the subject of distinct, prayerful meditation and application. We should receive the doctrines of the Word in faith and love, feed on them for soul nourishment and spiritual strength, and should be prepared joyfully to profess these, in the baptismal act, as the ground of our sure hope. Privileges and obligations to duty are necessarily and inseparably connected in the dispensation of the covenant of peace, and in the administration of holy ordinances. The one we cannot possibly enjoy without feeling the other; and in proportion as "spiritual blessings" in "heavenly things with Christ"¹ are really enjoyed, so will we be constrained in love to walk in newness of life. Coming to partake of eminent privileges in baptism, we should seriously consider the obligations which are thus laid upon us to be the Lord's, to live not to ourselves, but to Him who died for our sins, and who rose again for our justification. When we take the cup of salvation and call upon God, we come to pay our vows to the Lord before all his people. The plentiful provision of high privileges in baptism demands the consecration of ourselves and all we have to Him who has satisfied us with good things, and crowned us with tender mercy. To Abraham, when God gave him the covenant of circumcision, the announcement of the highest privilege was connected with the precept enjoining all holy obedience. To Christian parents, in like manner, the gracious declaration and promise, "I am God Almighty," "I will be a God to thee, and thy seed after thee," is inseparably connected with the comprehensive command, "Walk before me, and be thou perfect." Let these truths, privileges, and obligations be duly considered. Let them be felt as a solemn, personal concern in their proper connection and influence, and thus will be attained a main part of the preparation for receiving baptism as an ordinance fraught with blessings important and permanent.

¹ Ephesians i. 3; margin.

3. *Lively faith in the great mysteries presented in the ordinance.* In every religious service, we are solemnly reminded "that without faith it is impossible to please God." The grand principle of all acceptable obedience is the reliance of the heart upon Divine truths, the dependence of the whole man upon Christ and his finished work. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."¹ Every right view of the sacrament of baptism shows its observance to be eminently a work of faith. This is the essential and pervading principle of the whole service; and without it there can be no proper attendance upon the ordinance. We require faith to perceive the authority of the institution, and to discern its glory and excellence. Faith is needed to discern the connection between the outward symbol and the spiritual substance. By faith we behold in the service the blood of the covenant, and take hold of the blessed charter of salvation. The dedication of ourselves and ours must be the work of faith: in the exercise of the same holy grace we alone can apprehend the worth of the soul, estimate aright the grand provision made for its salvation, and trust the Redeemer for the accomplishment of his gracious assurances. "Nurse this child for me, and I will give thee thy wages." "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children."²

In approaching to this ordinance, it is specially required, not only to have the principle of faith in the heart, but to have it in lively exercise. It is by *actually believing*, and not by *reflecting on the nature and operations of faith*, that we realize Divine mysteries, and receive the blessing. In baptism, the great objects of faith are brought very near. They are "*represented, sealed, and applied to believers.*" We should, therefore, by looking to "the Author and Finisher of faith," draw near to these glorious objects. We should embrace a *personal Saviour*, as He is revealed appointing the ordinance, presiding in its administration, and dispensing all the blessing. His faithful word of promise should be received in faith; and his finished righteousness should be taken as the ground of all our dependence and hope for acceptance. The ordinance not only exhibits impressively the grand objects of faith, it presents likewise the strongest *supports and encouragements* to believing confidence. The Saviour's boundless compassion in receiving helpless, sinful human beings; the full provision of his love and mercy displayed and brought near to bless them; and his

¹ Hebrews xi. 6.

² Exodus ii. 9; Isaiah liv. 13.

truth and gracious offers declared and confirmed by an expressive rite, all supply "strong consolation" to them who flee for refuge to lay hold on the Gospel hope. What higher encouragement can we possibly expect to enable us to draw near in "the full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed as with pure water?" As we ought, in a special manner, to have faith in exercise before approaching to the baptismal service, so, in partaking of the ordinance, the blessing is to be sought and obtained only through the working of this grace. If we believe with all the heart, water may not be denied us to be baptized; and in the act of its application, by faith we apprehend the great mysteries of redemption, and receive the all-enriching blessing which is entitled—the baptism of the Holy Ghost, as with fire.

Lastly. As preparatory to the reception of baptism, we should, with much prayer and in humble penitence, and full purpose of heart, *take hold of God's covenant.*

The blessing dispensed through ordinances is enjoyed in answer to prayer. There is the amplest encouragement to expect it in this way. "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them." "Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not." "Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me." These Divine declarations furnish a large warrant and encouragement to expect acceptance and blessing in surrendering ourselves and our offspring to God in baptism. In an act of spiritual dedication, there is special need of genuine contrition of heart, and of godly sorrow for sin. We are naturally estranged from God, and devoted to the service of idols. Our children are under guilt, and the taint of moral depravity, and are exposed to condemnation. Solemn vows voluntarily made we have frequently broken, and because we regard iniquity in our heart, we have reason to fear that the Lord will not hear us. The frame and exercises of the genuine penitent peculiarly besit us, when we draw near to the holy Lord God, and when his name is named upon us. When we renew our own baptismal vow, we should do it in fervent prayer and in deep humility; and when we present our children to God, to be called by his name, to receive the seal of his covenant, and to be consecrated to his service, such exercises are specially

¹ Ezekiel xxxvi. 37; Jeremiah xxxiii. 3; Isaiah xlv. 11.

becoming. From us they derive a polluted nature ; and they are exposed to innumerable evils and dangers, which they have of themselves no power to escape. Their welfare for time and eternity is connected with the results of their baptismal dedication. In such solemn circumstances, the heart of a parent must be callous indeed, that is not humbled in the Divine presence, and that is not excited to earnest entreaty in behalf of his child. Fearing that God may justly remember against him former sins, and that the blessing may be withheld because it is not asked, or because it is asked amiss, he should seek the "Spirit of grace and supplication," and should pour out his heart in fervent prayer. Like "the father of the faithful," when he feared the exclusion of one child from the promised blessings, and earnestly asked, "Oh, that Ishmael might live !" he should plead for the life, spiritual and eternal, of his offspring. In baptism he should be able to declare, as the mother of Samuel, "For this child I prayed ; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of Him : therefore also I have lent him to the Lord ; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord." *

Taking hold of God's covenant by personal vowing is not only a chief part of the baptismal service, but is likewise an eminent preparation for it. By repentance and prayer we renounce all dependence upon works of our own for acceptance. We confess and mourn over our manifold breaches of God's law ; and we come to the Mediator of the new covenant, and lay hold of his righteousness. By appropriate symbols, the great provision of the "counsel of peace" is set before us in baptism. God graciously proposes to be a God and Portion to us and our seed. The Mediator is willing to receive "little children" to Himself, and to bless them. His blood is exhibited, in symbol, to pardon and cleanse them ; his Spirit is offered to sanctify and seal them ; and all the benefits of a "covenant, ordered in all things and sure," are held out, in impressive manifestation and gracious offer, to be to them an everlasting portion. What encouragement have we, by faith and solemn dedication, to avail ourselves of this merciful provision, and to declare, on the footing of such high encouragement, "I am the Lord's !" *Personal vowing* is a singular means of preparation for the reception of the sacraments. We come to them, not so much to engage, for the first time, to be on the Lord's side, as by bringing our

* 1 Samuel i. 27, 28.

previous acts of dedication with us, to renew them solemnly, and to have our personal covenant accepted and ratified. The promise to parents and their children in connection with such preparation is most gracious and abundant. To the "sons of the stranger" that *join themselves to the Lord, and take hold of his covenant*, it is promised, "Even unto them will I give in my house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people."¹

A pious minister in New England (Rev. John Baily) thus speaks of his feelings and private exercises preparatory to the baptism of one of his children: "I spent some time in offering up myself and my child to the Lord, and in taking hold of the covenant for myself and for him. It is a weighty matter to be done to-morrow in baptism. I prayed hard this day that I might be able, in much faith, and love, and new-covenant obedience, to do it to-morrow. It is not easy, though common, to offer a child unto God in baptism. O, that is a sweet word, 'I will be a God unto thee, and thy seed after thee.' No marvel Abraham fell on his face at the hearing of it."²

¹ Isaiah lvi. 5, 7.

² Quoted in *Bowder's Religious Education Enforced.*

CHAPTER VII.

ENGAGEMENT AND DUTIES CONNECTED WITH BAPTISM.

ALTHOUGH overlooked in controversy, and greatly neglected in practice, the engagement in baptism is solemn and explicit ; and the duties which it involves are among the most weighty and important, whether they are regarded as referring to families, to the rising generation, to the world, or to the Church of Christ. Those who deny the doctrine of infant baptism, and who lay undue stress upon the mode of administration, give evidence, by their writings, that they make the outward rite the all-important matter, and give little or no prominence to the obligations and improvement of baptism. Vast multitudes, again, who admit in theory the right of infants to be baptized, and who seek the ordinance for their children, seem hardly ever to think that they are brought under any peculiar engagement in the matter, and certainly do not give evidence afterwards that they cherish any sense of obligation to practical duties from participation in this ordinance. How few, besides, of the youth even of the Church appear to feel that their baptism has brought them under sacred engagements, or seem alive to the responsibility and obligations arising from their baptismal vow !

It cannot, however, for a moment be questioned, that there is a very full and comprehensive engagement implied in baptism, binding to solemn duties, the performance of which is most beneficial to the individuals and to the whole Church. These duties embrace the great matters of practical godliness, and are intimately connected with the revival, spread, and prevalence of true religion in the world. They naturally and necessarily result from the baptismal engagement ; and some of the most powerful motives and encouragements for their due performance are derived from the same source.¹

¹ The most distinguished theological writers, both of former and later times, who are evangelical in sentiment, have held that baptism involves a special engagement, on the part of the participant, to embrace the benefits offered, and to be devoted to the service of God. Thus Witsius, in his

The Westminster divines, in the "Shorter Catechism," state in brief but comprehensive terms, that baptism "doth signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the covenant of grace, and our ENGAGEMENT TO BE THE LORD'S." This engagement, in the case of those who are baptized in adult age, is a solemn public declaration of the relinquishment of former evil courses, and of separation from the world, and an open avouchment of being on the Lord's side, of connection with his people, and devotion to his service. In the case of the baptism of the infant children of Christian parents, it respects both the parents and the children. We admit that, although the blessing frequently comes in this way, the efficacy of baptism does not depend upon the faith or vows of the parent. Still, the parental vow, when properly made, has an important influence upon both the parent and his child. As a parent, he receives a most valuable privilege himself, while he obtains peculiar benefits for his offspring. The spiritual interests of both are so involved in the baptismal transaction, that they cannot be separated; and the obligation resulting from the enjoyment of high privilege and from solemnly pledged vows, devolves, though in different respects, upon the one and the other.

The parent, in receiving the seal of the covenant, vows for himself, and engages to be the Lord's. This, if rightly performed, is a public renewal of vows formerly made; and it implies that he accepts of God, in covenant, as his God and Portion—that he resigns himself wholly to his guidance and

Economy of the Covenants, remarks, "There are those two things in baptism—God stipulates, or requires, a good conscience towards Himself; and the conscience answers, or promises, to God, that it will endeavour to be so; or, which seems more plain, man engages to keep a good conscience" (vol. ii. p. 432). Dr Hill justly states the sentiments of orthodox divines on this subject—"The sacraments, in the opinion of Calvinists, constitute federal acts, in which the persons who receive them, with proper dispositions, solemnly engage to fulfil their part of the covenant, and God confirms his promise to them in a sensible manner; not as if the promise of God were in itself insufficient to render any event certain, but because this manner of exhibiting the blessings promised gives a stronger impression of the truth of the promise, and conveys to the mind an assurance that it will be fulfilled." From this view Dr H. describes baptism as a "significant representation both of what the baptized persons engaged to do, and also of the grace by which their sins were forgiven, and strength communicated to their souls;" so that it "rises from being a mere profession of faith—a mere external rite—to be a federal act, by which the mutual stipulations of the covenant of grace are confirmed."—Hill's *Lectures on Divinity*, vol. ii. pp. 328, 335.

blessing, and engages, as an individual and a parent, to walk in newness of life. The baptismal vow lays the parent under a *superadded* obligation to fidelity and diligence in all duty which he owes to God and his household. It carries with it the force of an oath ratifying a promise—of a bond subscribed before witnesses—of a seal attached to a writing to give it confirmation and validity. In all these cases, it is universally admitted that the obligation to perform the engagement is strengthened, and that the criminality of neglect or violation is aggravated. The parent, by a solemn voluntary vow in baptism, binds himself to walk in a perfect way within his house, and, like the veteran Joshua, he virtually declares, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”¹

But the Christian parent may be properly viewed, too, as, in baptism, entering into an engagement in behalf of his child, that *it* also shall be the Lord’s. It has been contended, indeed, that the parent vows for himself, and not for the child; that “he promises in his own name, not in the name of the child,” and that “the duties to which he becomes bound are strictly parental.”² Such a statement, however, we regard neither as accordant with the recognized usages of society, nor with the representations of Sacred Scripture in analogous instances of public social vowing. Parents represent and act for their children in infancy, or even unborn, in bonds and civil compacts; and if the engagement is moral, heirs and executors are regarded as thereby laid under an obligation to implement the condition of the bond, as they expect to enjoy the benefit of the entail. When Israel covenanted at Horeb, and, forty years after, on the plains of Moab, their infant seed, and even posterity unborn, are declared to have been embraced in the solemn transaction; and many generations afterwards, the nation is punished for the violation of this covenant.³

The federal deed is regarded as binding posterity equally as it did those who originally entered into it. Under the former economy, the circumcised were bound to keep the whole law; and though the child of eight days’ old was incapable of personally vowing, yet the Israelitish parent took hold of God’s covenant in its name; and, as represented by the parent, it was virtually pledged to be the Lord’s. Whatever may be said of the expressions employed in the form of baptism in the service of the Church of England, in which the sponsors speak for the

¹ Josh. xxiv. 15.

² M’Crie’s *Lectures on Baptism*, p. 38.

³ Deut. v. and xxix.; Jer. xi.

child, there can be no doubt that, while the parent voluntarily renews sacred vows for himself, he, at the same time, in the act of dedication, pledges his child to be God's, to walk afterwards in all holy obedience. The language and spirit of eminent servants of God, when taking hold of God's covenant for themselves and their children, are most befitting Christian parents, as they reflect on their solemn engagement. "Bless God," says the excellent Matthew Henry, "that the covenant of grace is so ordered, that not you only, but your offspring, are taken into that covenant; that God will be a God, not to you only, but to your seed (Gen. xvii. 7), and so entail his kindness, by a covenant commanded to a thousand generations. Thus richly doth free grace outdo all expectation. That God should signify his good-will to us is very wonderful; but, lo! as if this had been a small matter, He hath spoken concerning his servant's house for a great while to come; and is this the manner of men, O Lord God! (2 Sam. vii. 19). Admire the condescension of Divine grace herein. Many great men think it beneath them to take notice of children; but our Lord Jesus will have little children brought to Him, and by no means forbidden. Mention this to the glory of God's wisdom and goodness, and never forget this instance of his loving-kindness."¹

I. *Engagement of Parents in Baptism.*

Considering the baptismal engagement in its *twofold* aspect—as it respects parents, and as it rests upon children—we regard it as obliging parents—

1. Themselves to walk *as examples of the power of true religion*. Parents should exemplify before their children the holy religion which they profess; otherwise their instructions will be unavailing. It has been well observed, that whatever other lessons children may learn or neglect, the spirit and conduct of parents are continually before them; and this is a copy which they may be expected always to transcribe—and the more so from their innate depravity—if the parental example is faulty or inconsistent. To a reflecting parent, nothing can be more distressful than to be the means of perverting his own children, or to see his own sins re-appearing in their character and conduct, thus exposing them to the punishment which consists in visiting "the iniquities of the fathers upon the children."

¹ *Treatise on Baptism.* Complete Works of M. Henry, p. 555.

Christian parents should exhibit an example of abounding in all the duties of religion—private, domestic, and public. This example should display whatsoever things are honest, lovely, pure, and of good report. It should uniformly manifest the Christian temper—ever attracting towards religion, and containing nothing repulsive. The dignity and sacredness of a patriarch and priest, in his house, should be blended with the gentleness, meekness, and tenderness of a father that compassionates his children—who can enter into their every case, and who is ever ready to counsel, sympathize with, and do them good. The Christian parent should always be prepared to say to his household, by an instructive, consistent, impressive example, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.” Like the monarch of Israel, he should thus “bless his house.” He should

“Point to brighter worlds, and lead the way.”

Religion in parents should be seen directing every word and action, and influencing the whole temper and spirit. It should shed a halo of light around the conduct; and in all the chequered scenes of human life, in domestic trials, as well as duties and enjoyments, it should exert a commanding power. To act thus, parents bind themselves in their engagement at baptism; and those who have been real blessings to their children, have not only, at the time of coming to the ordinance, been aware that this was the import of their solemn vows, but have afterwards laboured to walk in accordance with it before their families. Not a few who have been distinguished servants of God, and have occupied public stations in the Church, have confessed that it was owing to parental example, and especially to the attractive example of their *mothers*, that they were first drawn to the ways of religion; and to this, in a great measure, may be traced their subsequent attainments and usefulness.

2. To cherish *always a deep sense of their responsibility*. However little parental responsibility is considered or felt, it is most weighty and extensive. Parents are the instruments of the earthly existence of their children. From them they inherit a polluted nature, and are, in consequence, under guilt and condemnation. At their birth they are introduced to an evil world, and on every side temptations and dangers surround them. The journey of life on which they have entered conducts them forward to the eternal state; and happiness, or

misery unending, will be their final portion. They will have connection, if spared beyond infancy, with other human beings, and must diffuse around them either an influence for good, that will allure others to the ways of virtue, or of evil, that will mislead others to ruin. How solemn to a Christian parent must be reflection on these things! In virtue of his relation to his child, and of his engagement in baptism, it devolves upon him, as an instrument above every other, to labour to rescue his child from the curse, to guard him against temptation, and to guide him into the way of peace. Can he ever lose sight of this weighty responsibility? When he may feel wholly insufficient for these things, and may tremble in view of the consequences that flow from neglect or failure, he should betake himself to that grace which is all-sufficient both for him and his child. He should eagerly avail himself of every means prescribed in the Word to bring his offspring to God for a blessing. A due sense of his responsibility will lead him to travail as in birth till Christ be formed in the heart of his seed, and till he obtains some satisfactory evidence that they have become the subjects of regenerating grace, and are numbered in the family of heaven. It will impel him to cherish an earnest and heart-felt concern for the early conversion of his children, and to employ all appointed means to secure for them the blessing.

The parental engagement is commensurate with the continuance of the relation between the parent and the child. Of this responsibility he cannot divest himself as long as he and the child lives. The vow in baptism explicitly recognized it; and the future course of life is, at every stage, to indicate its practical operation. How should parents, under such a solemn accountability, watch and pray always! How should they dread failure, and the doom of a steward that is unfaithful to the highest trust! How diligently and perseveringly should they labour that they may be found approved at last; and that they may be able to say, as they present their solemn charge to the Judge at his coming, "Behold I and the children whom God hath given me!"

3. *To train their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.* The grand design of the baptismal rite holds parents engaged to educate their children for God and for heaven. The little ones are presented to God, and solemnly dedicated to his service. In the ordinance of his own appointment, God accepts the surrender, and affixes his visible seal to the baptized infant. He then restores it to the parent, the person the most

deeply interested in its welfare, and commits it to him for future instruction, and for all the training befitting one that has been given up to God, and that has been solemnly pledged to his service. The parental engagement in baptism has an express and immediate connection with this work. The parent receives back again his children from the hands of God and his servants, as a second time given him, to be nursed, not for himself, but for a service and destiny worthy an immortal being interested in the redemption of Christ.

This vow implies that all proper instruction shall be provided for the child—that it shall be made early acquainted with its lost state by nature, with the character and claims of Christ as a Master, with the excellence of his service, and with the recompense of the reward that awaits the faithful servant. It is not by mere instruction or command that children are to be brought up in the service of God. They are to be *nurtured* in piety, and *trained* in “the way in which they should go.”¹ They must be carefully taught the good and right way; and instructions should be given them diligently, according to their capacity to receive them, and adapted to their varied duties, temptations, and trials. The lessons of the Divine Word must be at one time imparted to them as “sincere milk” for babes, and at another as “strong meat” for them that are of full age. The authority of God, and of his law, must be clearly exhibited and strongly impressed on the child’s heart and conscience; and the doctrines of God’s moral government and providence, and of man’s recovery through the redemption of Christ, must be continually presented, to deepen in the child’s mind the sense of God’s authority, and to lead him to flee from the wrath to come. Parental instructions must be communicated with patience and perseverance, and yet with authority, and enforced by example. The honourable testimony which God gave to Abraham, the father of the faithful, should be sought by every parent while imparting instruction to his children, and in training them to virtue and usefulness, “I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, to know the Lord, to do justice and judgment.”² Habits for good are to be formed in youth, evil propensities to be corrected and eradicated, and an immortal, accountable being is to be led to discharge faithfully his duty to God while in the world, and to be prepared for the exalted service and enjoyment of God in glory.

¹ Proverbs xxii. 6.

² Genesis xviii. 19.

Such is the Christian parent's work in relation to his children ; and to perform it faithfully he solemnly engages in the act of baptismal dedication. This work the parent should regard as peculiarly his. None other can, in this case, supply his place. He is the chief selected instrument for the important trust ; and from his intimate relation to his offspring he has facilities for conveying instruction, employing authority and example, and carrying on a course of moral training and discipline, which no other person possesses. A great reward will be his, if this training is blessed for effecting the desired purpose. Should the child, on the other hand, perish through neglect of parental instruction and superintendence, and the want of a proper example, who can tell the fearful doom of him who has the blood of a lost child required at his hands ? The engagement to bring up children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, in all its extensive application and momentous consequences, should be solemnly pondered by parents in presenting their children in baptism, and should be ever after considered, as supplying the most powerful motives to the diligent and faithful performance of all parental duties.

Finally. The parental engagement in baptism has regard *to the actual employment of children in works that honour God in the world, and that advance his kingdom.* All previous training converges to this end. To live to God's glory is the great end of human existence ; and the vow of a Christian parent cannot but embrace this for himself, and this, too, as the grand object of all his efforts and desires for his children. The excellent John Brown of Haddington declared, shortly before his death, "If I had a thousand lives to live, and a thousand children, I would willingly give them all to promote the conversion of sinners and the advancement of Christ's kingdom in the world, as this appears far the noblest end of my being." It is not enough for parents to teach the way of duty, or to talk of efforts for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. It is not even sufficient to show, by their own example, that they are abounding in prayer and other religious duties. They should take children betimes by the hand, and engage them in religious duties ; not only pray with them and for them, and teach them how to pray, but see also that they actually pray. Like Joshua, they should resolve, and act on the resolution, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Not, "I will serve God without my house, or, my house, while I am excused ; but, I first, and then my house,

and I and my house together." The engagement of parents, too, should contemplate, as a high honour, their children, who are a part of themselves, and to live when they are gone, employed in active exertions for the spread of Divine truth, and the establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom. The testimony and the law left in Israel parents are to transmit to posterity, and to charge them to hand down the deposit to future generations. What higher privilege is there than thus to have our families pledged to a cause which employed the counsels of eternity, and which brought the Son of God to earth! What more honourable than to see them embarked in an enterprise which prophets, apostles, and martyrs regarded with rapt delight, and which angels celebrate in their loftiest praises! The parental vow should regard the Redeemer's glory as all and all; and the Christian parent should view himself and his seed as living and enjoying privilege only for the purpose of advancing it. Like the Church universal, in the forty-fifth Psalm, he should declare of Christ, in his solemn engagement, "I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever." Thus, too, will be realized the gracious assurance given respecting dedicated children, "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth."¹

The following brief form of the baptismal covenant was prepared by the excellent Philip Henry, the father of the commentator, for the use of his children. He taught it to them early, and each of them solemnly repeated it every Lord's day, in the evening, after catechising, he putting his amen to it, and sometimes adding, "So say, and so do; and you are made for ever:"—

CHILD'S PERSONAL COVENANT.

"I take the Lord to be my chiefest good, and highest end.

"I take God the Son to be my Prince and Saviour.

"I take the Holy Ghost to be my sanctifier, teacher, guide, and comforter.

"I take the Word of God to be my rule in all my actions; and the people of God to be my people in all conditions.

"I do likewise devote and dedicate unto the Lord my whole self—all I am, all I have, all I can do.

"And this I do deliberately, sincerely, freely, and for ever."

Speaking of this transaction, Mr Henry's biographer says, "He also took pains with them to lead them to the under-

¹ Psalm xlv. 16, 17.

standing of it, and to persuade to a free and cheerful consent to it; and when they grew up, he made them all write it over severally, with their own hands, and very solemnly set their names to it, which he told them he would keep by him, and it should be produced as a testimony against them, in case they should afterwards depart from God, and turn from following after Him."¹

II. *Engagement of Children in Baptism.*

We have seen that there is a virtual pledge offered by parents in behalf of their children in the baptismal vow. This, beyond doubt, devolves on the child when he becomes capable of understanding the purport of it, in like manner as the obligation of bonds and covenants falls upon posterity who are represented in them, when they cease to be minors. Besides, the ordinance of baptism carries with it an obligation to the performance of solemn duties on those to whom it is administered, just as the Scriptures expressly tell us that they who were circumcised became by the act of circumcision bound to "keep the whole law."

If it is inquired, What is the ground of this obligation? On what principle are infant children, who are incapable of pledging vows themselves, held engaged to solemn and special duties in virtue of their baptism? we reply—

1. *That the covenant and institution of Christ* clearly furnish ground for such an obligation. In virtue of the covenant of grace, God claims the children of his people as his, previously to their baptism. They are numbered with his peculiar people, and belong to his visible Church, in virtue of a federal connection with his people, as soon as they are born into the world. Abraham, when he believed God, and took hold of his covenant, became entitled to the seal of circumcision, not for himself alone, but also for his posterity. This principle runs through the whole of the former dispensation. The infant seed of Israelitish parents were regarded as included in the covenant, not absolutely as heirs of its spiritual blessings, but as laid under obligation to all the duties connected with the profession of an Israelite. On the same ground, the promise to the seed of Christian parents, that God will be their God, implies that they will

¹ *Life and Times of Rev. Philip Henry*, p. 120. London: Thomas Nelson, 1848.

be his servants—to choose Him as their Lord and Portion, and to walk before Him in newness of life. Baptism is, properly speaking, primarily *a seal on God's part*, though it becomes ours too by our accepting it. In virtue of their connection with the covenant, the glorious Mediator authorizes his servants to apply his visible seal to children. In the fullest sense of the phrase, *He baptizes them* through the instrumentality of his ministers. He thereby publicly and visibly separates them from others, and claims them as his peculiar heritage and possession. Like an indenture signed and sealed, their baptism openly displays them to others as the Lord's pledged servants. As the Hebrew servant, who refused to leave his master on the year of release, by a significant rite declared his willingness to remain in subjection, so the baptized are engaged to perpetual fidelity to their Master, and are held bound to remain in his house for ever.

2. The *dedication* made of children in baptism implies the fullest obligation to all the duties of a holy profession. Parents in baptism bring their children to God's altar, and owning his paramount right to them and his interest in them, surrender them to the Lord, and consecrate them to his service. This surrender is substantially what every believer makes of himself, when he enters into a personal covenant, and when, recognizing the Divine claim upon all that he is and all that he has, he devotes himself to God. It is the giving up of the child as "a living sacrifice." It is "yielding" the soul "to God, as alive from the dead," and the body as an instrument "of righteousness unto holiness." Abraham, at the institution of circumcision, dedicated himself, and Ishmael and Isaac his sons, and all that were in his house, to God; and the action, we are expressly informed, was followed by Divine approval. Under the Jewish economy, all the firstborn sons of Israel were regarded as peculiarly dedicated to God. The Levites, substituted for them at first, were separated for God's immediate service, and the *redemption-money* subsequently paid for them was cast into the sacred treasury. The whole Church under the New Testament is entitled the "Church of the Firstborn," and all who are recognized as members in it by baptism, are introduced to the privileges of the firstborn, as they are obliged to live as a "royal priesthood," and as pertaining to a "holy nation" and a "peculiar people."

Thus early dedication imposes a solemn and weighty obliga-

tion to live to God. It is related in history, that Amilcar, the father of Hannibal, led his son, when only eight years old, to the altar, and made him swear by the gods of his country eternal enmity to the Romans. His future military achievements were not a little influenced by this early engagement. In a far higher and better sense, a Christian child may be conceived as in baptism vowing to be on the Lord's side, to fight against spiritual enemies, and to follow after holiness. A due sense of baptismal dedication is frequently connected with the first gracious work of the Spirit in the heart; and subsequent reflection on it supplies the most powerful and affecting motives to walk in all holy obedience. To such parental consecration to God and his service, the inspired psalmist appears to refer, when he joyfully acknowledges God's distinguishing goodness, and when he renews his engagement to be the Lord's: "O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people."¹

III. *The purport of the Engagement made in Baptism.*

It is related of Philip Henry, in his *Life*, that "in dealing with his children about their spiritual state, he took hold of them very much by the handle of their infant baptism, and frequently inculcated upon them that they were born in God's house, and were betimes dedicated and given up to Him, and therefore were obliged to be his servants." A proper consideration of this kind will help the young to a right view of their engagement in baptism, and may assist them, too, in fulfilling the solemn obligation.

The engagement of the baptized implies—

1. A FULL RENUNCIATION OF ALL SPIRITUAL ENEMIES. In the primitive Church this renunciation was explicitly made. One Christian father, speaking of baptism, says, "We renounce the devil and his pomps and his angels."² Another says, "The baptized renounce the evil spirit, and all his damnable pomps."³ In the formula of baptism in the Church of England, the person answering for the child is taught to declare, "I renounce the devil and all his works, the vain pomp and glory

¹ Psalm cxvi. 16-18.

² Tertullian.

³ Origen.

of the world, with all covetous desires of the same, and the carnal desires of the flesh, so that I will not follow, nor be led by them."¹ Now, whether this renunciation is made more or less expressly, it is certainly involved in the rite of initiation into the Church. Children are by nature under the power of the evil one, are corrupt in the desires and inclinations of the heart, and are exposed to innumerable evils, which war against the soul. From these they require to be delivered, if they would enjoy the privileges of God's people, and partake of the benefits of redemption. In receiving the grace of salvation, and embracing the Gospel, we come out and are separate. We escape from the slavery of Satan, and give up connection with his servants and works. We become children of God, are enrolled in his family, and become subjects of the kingdom of heaven. Baptism is the accredited sign of this change, the visible symbol that we have forsaken our former master and his service, and that we have pledged our allegiance to the Captain of Salvation. The Redeemer, by appointing the ordinance to be administered to us, claims us as his; and the young in receiving it virtually declare, "What have I to do any more with idols?" "O Lord, I am thine; save me." It is of great importance for children to be made early to feel that they have been pledged in the most solemn manner to renounce Satan, to deny ungodliness and the lusts of the flesh, and to relinquish the world and its vanities.

2. **PROFESSED SUBJECTION TO CHRIST, AND FELLOWSHIP WITH HIS PEOPLE.** In the instances of apostolic baptism recorded in the New Testament, it is said, "As many as received the Word were baptized;" and again, "Those who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ were baptized." Once more, it is declared in reference to all the baptized, "As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ."² These expressions plainly imply a *profession of the truth of Christ, relation to Him, and practical obedience* to his commands. All truth is centred in Christ, the Alpha and Omega of Divine revelation. When the grand truth of Christ's atonement is confessed, baptism is administered, and the baptized come under an engagement to receive instruction in whatever Christ has commanded, and to profess it before the world. In this

¹ *Book of Common Prayer, Baptismal Service.*

² *Galatians iii. 27.* The figurative language here used has been supposed to refer to "robes of honour and distinction—official vestments, such as royal, judicial, or military robes."—M'Crie's *Lectures on Baptism*, p. 144.

ordinance, the Saviour exhibits himself as the King and Head of his people—their Physician, Shepherd, Husband, Father, and Friend. In these endearing relations, the baptized are engaged to receive Him, rely on Him for all the benefits which flow from them, and act consistently with the honourable station to which they are thereby called. Having named the name of Christ, they are bound to depart from all iniquity. In baptism we publicly take the honourable name of Christian; and this rightly understood implies—a believer in Christ, a lover of Christ, one that confesses his truth, is concerned to advance his glory, and that lives in subjection to his authority, and obedience to his laws. With baptized persons, it is not left optional whether they will live as believers in Christ, and act consistently with Christian character. They are already solemnly engaged to submit to Christ's yoke, to confess Him before men, and to act as his willing servants. To manifest ignorance of this obligation, or to refuse to acknowledge it, is wilful covenant-breaking, and cannot but incur the fearful displeasure of Him who has all power to execute judgment on his enemies, as well as mercy to reward his faithful servants. The service of Christ is perfect freedom; and those who properly feel their baptismal engagement will be ever ready to declare joyfully, "I am the Lord's," and joining themselves to his people, to "subscribe with their hand to the Lord," and to "surname themselves by the name of Israel." ¹

3. DEDICATION TO GOD IN COVENANT—A THREE-ONE GOD. The Triune name is named upon us in baptism; and this, as we have already shown, implies an act of express dedication to the glorious Godhead. Each of the Divine persons is present to witness the solemn transaction, to accept the dedication, and to confer the desired blessing. Surely if the rite has any meaning, and the use of the Triune name is not an empty form, it must intend that the baptized are engaged to take God the Father as their Father, God the Son as their Saviour and Friend, and God the Spirit as their Sanctifier and Guide. How important and honourable are such relations! How criminal and insatuated ever to be unmindful of such a solemn engagement! Its frequent remembrance, in a spirit and conduct befitting it, must evidently conduce to a life at once useful and happy. It is the just remark of Matthew Henry, "that a life of holiness is a life of renewed acts of self-dedication." Such dedication, when rightly made, is just the renewal of the

¹ Isaiah xlv. 5.

baptismal covenant. The substance of it is to accept of a Triune God as a portion, and to love and serve Him with the whole heart and soul, and strength and mind. This is the grand end of our existence ; and while it alone is worthy of a rational, accountable being, it implies the diligent discharge of the highest duties, and the enjoyment of the most exalted and enduring privileges.

4. THE ANSWER OF A GOOD CONSCIENCE toward God in the whole life. The Apostle Peter declares: "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." ¹ This cannot mean the correct answering of questions on doctrine previous to baptism, for this may be given when yet the individual is destitute of real grace, and without an interest in God's salvation. Nor does it intend that anything wrought in our heart and conscience is the ground of our salvation. But the expression teaches that baptism represents the peace and purity that result from the renewal of the heart, and the sanctification of the nature. The embodied substance of this representation is a conscience purified by the atoning blood of Christ, and made tender by the renewal of the Spirit. Baptism symbolizes pardon and purity and peace, and these blessings enjoyed are just the realization of the symbol. A life of holiness is this "answer of a good conscience." They have great peace who love God's law. To be holy is to be happy ; and those who exercise themselves daily, as the Apostle Paul, "to have a conscience void of offence toward God and men," supply the best answer to the engagement made in baptism.

It need scarcely be added, that the engagement in baptism implies that neglect of religion by the baptized is an aggravated sin, attended by the most fatal consequences. When the Israelitish people broke the covenant of which circumcision was the seal, they were rejected as excinded branches. Having violated solemn engagements, they were dis severed from the covenant, and were cast out of God's peculiar favour and protection. Such still is the baleful fruit of forgetting the covenant of one's youth, and departing from God. This solemn bond implied sacred engagements, and when these are neglected, the consequences are in the highest measure deplorable. Baptized youth, proving infidel in profession, and ungodly in practice,

¹ 1 Peter iii. 21.

generally do worse than others, and are left to a more fearful doom. Like Julian the apostate, some attempt, by forsaking religion and associating with the ungodly, to wash away their baptism. The fearful retribution that pursues them shows that God remembers their baptismal engagement. He visits them as covenant-breakers—gives them up to their own hearts' lusts, and leaves them to final rejection.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION: THE OBLIGATION, AND MOTIVES TO PROMOTE IT ARISING FROM BAPTISM.

THE education of the young has been not improperly said to be the grand question of the day, as upon its settlement must depend, in a great measure, the character and condition of individuals, and the destinies of communities. Whether the education of the people shall be attended to or neglected? what kind of instruction shall be imparted to them? what are the ends to be proposed in education? are inquiries of the deepest interest; and the proper solution of them intimately concerns all who would desire to benefit mankind, as the course adopted must be productive either of salutary or baleful fruits, for indefinite ages to come.

It is perfectly obvious—and all history bears testimony to the fact—that the character impressed upon nations is according as parental training and other education has moulded them; and it is now all but universally admitted, that the peace, well-being, and prosperity of nations is inseparably connected with the proper instruction of the young, who are to be their future rulers or citizens. Other things being equal, and taking education in its comprehensive meaning, as embracing not only intellectual acquirements, but likewise proper moral discipline and habits, a well-educated community will enjoy physical comfort, advance in civilization, and attain to influence and greatness vastly above one that is uneducated, or whose education is conducted on a wrong principle, or perverted to unworthy ends.

Into the subject of the *obligations of the State* in relation to education—into the question of national education, however interesting or important—we do not at present enter, as our principal concern is to exhibit the duty of establishing a right education, as flowing from the baptismal engagement—an engagement immediately pertaining to persons as members of the Church, and not as citizens of the commonwealth. If this

obligation is fully established, it may be seen indirectly, or by legitimate consequence, to devolve upon the State too. At least, it will be manifest that a Christian government cannot, without high criminality, do anything in the matter of education that would contravene the authoritative injunctions of the Head of the Church, to provide for the thorough instruction of all who are committed to her care, or that would throw impediments in the way of fulfilling the command of her exalted Sovereign.

That the Church is bound to provide for the proper education of all her members, and to extend this blessing throughout the world, appears obvious—

1. From the great Commission of the risen Saviour to his apostles, and to all his future ministers. “Go ye therefore and teach”—or make disciples of—“all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”¹ This commission, it is worthy of remark, is issued in immediate connection with the Saviour proclaiming his universal headship and authority. “*All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. ‘Go ye therefore,’*” &c. It is, moreover, inseparably connected with the institution of baptism, *teaching* being enjoined both before and after the command to baptize. While the nations of the world are to be *discipled* by baptizing them, those who are initiated by the Christian rite are afterwards to be *taught* all things whatsoever Christ has commanded. The Church is established in the world to execute whatever Christ has committed to her agency. This is the great end for which she is designed in relation to the world in which she is placed—the unreclaimed territory of the prince of darkness. The execution of this high trust is the chief evidence of her fidelity to her glorious King, and the eminent way of securing his presence and blessing; as neglect here must involve a forfeiture of his favour, and incur his fearful displeasure.

The commission plainly renders it the duty of the Church, and of every believer, to do these *three* things—1. “To make known God’s light and salvation to every creature;” 2. “To disciple all nations—that is, to bring them into connection with Christ’s Church or school, that they may become disciples therein;” and 3. “To instruct thoroughly in all that Christ has commanded, all who are thus discipled.” This last depart-

¹ Matthew xxviii. 19, 20.

ment of the Church's duty, in the terms of the commission, contemplates a very extensive diffusion of the means of proper instruction. "All nations" are elsewhere designated "every creature." They are "the uttermost parts of the earth," to be given to the Redeemer for his inheritance—"the isles" that "shall wait for his law." The "field is the world;" and by the instrumentality that Christ has ordained are men in every condition and clime to be brought to the obedience of faith, and to be taught whatsoever the Redeemer has commanded.

The Church is the grand institute set up for this purpose. She is the teacher of the nations—the instructor of every creature. By the solemn rite of baptism, disciples are gathered from the nations, and are entered in Christ's school. The teaching of infant children is committed to parents; and yet this is done by a public rite, in the presence of the Church, as implying that the whole Church is concerned in it, and will see to its faithful execution. The teaching of the Church, however, is not to be confined to infantile members. It concerns the whole period of human life, from infancy to the grave. It is not alone by the services of the sanctuary in public worship that the various classes committed to the Church's care are to be taught the "all things whatsoever Christ has commanded." Training for the employments and duties of human life—the Sabbath-school, the prayer-meeting, the exercise of discipline, and originating and maintaining schemes of Christian benevolence—are certainly embraced in the comprehensive scope of our Lord's commission.

Practice, too, is as necessary here as profession. "Keeping Christ's commandments" is as essentially the *observing* of them, as believing the directions and promises of the Word.

2. The significant and impressive rite of baptism implies that *the whole education of the baptized is to be conducted so as to subserve the great design of the institution.* Children are brought to God, and are dedicated to Him, that they may know Him. This is the grand end of their existence—the beginning, progress, and perfection of their happiness. "This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."¹ All subsequent instruction must be connected with the growth of religion in the heart, else it is of no real value. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the Holy is understanding."² The dedication in baptism implies that the young

¹ John xvii. 3.

² Proverbs ix. 10.

shall be taught in the good and right way. It is the giving up not only of the body, but of the mind and soul, the consecration of the whole life to God. This, if it has any proper meaning, implies that the dedicated one shall be carefully instructed in relation to his diversified duties ; that every part of the life, and all its pursuits, shall give evidence of this dedication carried into actual effect. Then, the subject of baptism is publicly introduced into the Church. He is entered in Christ's school, to learn his Master's will, that he may do it. All the best means of instruction are largely provided for him ; and these are not only given that he may know how to conduct himself in the house of God, but also that he may discharge the duties of life, and conduct himself in the world as a follower of the Lamb, and a citizen of heaven.

The duty of teaching little children, in the period of life that succeeds their baptismal dedication, something of the principles and duties of religion, is pretty generally admitted, and to some extent practised. Even when the Church is neglectful of the charge of her infantile members, parents regard themselves as bound to communicate the first elements of religious education. The evil, however, is, that not only this is often done in a very superficial manner, but that these instructions cease at a period when it is most important that they should be continued, or superseded by a more thorough training. The Church's duty to her baptized members is to "teach every creature, both theoretically and practically, *until* they are old, and until the end of their lives." The period of which the Church and many parents are criminally neglectful, is the *school-going* age of children ; and that is the time of life "immeasurably the most important and the most promising." Children, during this period, are acknowledged as disciples, and they are looked forward to as, in a little, to become the friends, supporters, and members of the Church. Yet, on the part of both parent and of the Church, the education of the young, in a proper sense, at this time of life, is overlooked or neglected. Mental training is divorced from religion. Children are placed in the hands of instructors who have no concern for their immortal interests, and who do not consider religious instruction as any part of their business. The matter is left entirely in the hands of irreligious or careless teachers ; and no healing salt is cast into these waters. A neglect of this kind is a practical violation of the baptismal vow of the parent, and of the virtual engagement of those who administer, and of those who concur in the ad-

ministration of the solemn rite. The consequences are every way deplorable. The young thus neglected often grow up careless, and make no profession of religion. They cast off the authority of the parent, the Bible, and the Church; and, taking the way of the world, live ungodly, and ultimately go to misery and ruin. Thus are the hopes of the Church blasted; and instead of being built up by the accession of youthful members, Zion mourns over her long desolations. "There is none to guide her among all the sons whom she hath brought forth; neither is there any that taketh her by the hand of all the sons that she has brought up."¹ A due consideration of the nature and design of the ordinance of baptism, and of the duties involved in it towards the young, would go far to remedy this neglect, and to prevent these melancholy consequences.

3. There is abundant proof that, *in former times, the Church fully recognized her obligation to provide a thorough scriptural education for her baptized members, and to extend the same blessing throughout the world.* The great end for which the Church was established was, that she should train up a godly seed, and that those instructed in the truth, and imbued with right principles and habits, should be the instruments of maintaining and extending true religion in the world. The ancient Church of God, in the best periods of her history, steadily prosecuted this end, and availed herself of the means divinely appointed for its attainment. Infants were recognized and sealed as members. They were carried up to Jerusalem at an early age, on the occasion of the public festivals; and parents were strictly enjoined to give them instructions in religion at all times and upon all occasions. "These words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up."² Not only were Israelitish parents commanded to instruct their children in relation to their obligation to obey the Divine law, they were to make them familiar with the history of God's Church, the meaning of holy ordinances, the covenant and testimony of God, and the judgments or mercies dispensed by Jehovah, in connection with the rebellion or the obedience of his ancient people. While religion flourished in the Jewish nation, these injunctions were carefully observed, and the commonwealth prospered, through the Divine blessing, and became great and powerful,

¹ Isaiah li. 18.

² Deuteronomy vi. 6, 7.

as succeeding races rose up, well trained in the knowledge and fear of God.

The New Testament economy carries out the same great principle of parents and the Church collective being under a primary obligation to bring up the young in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. There is abundant evidence from ecclesiastical history that, in primitive times, the instruction and discipline of children were objects of unceasing care and labour. The office of teacher, or doctor, existed wherever the Church was established, and the youth of the Church were preserved from the influence of Pagan learning, and were trained for the duties of life in a manner accordant with their baptismal dedication. "In the primitive Church every congregation, as a general rule, or several, according to their ability, had their school, and larger districts their catechetical or higher seminaries or colleges."¹

In the dark ages, the Waldenses, those early witnesses for truth, were distinguished for the religious instruction and discipline of their children. Doubtless it was owing, through the Divine blessing, to their remarkable diligence in this matter that, notwithstanding severe persecution, they maintained their existence as a compact and united body, that their testimony was transmitted from one generation to another, and that they remained so long true to their ancient motto, "*Lux in tenebris*"²—a "beacon for the admiration and guidance of the Church in after times." Authentic history informs us, that these simple-minded, Bible-loving people, employed every hour which they could gain from labour and sleep in the acquisition of knowledge for themselves, and in imparting it to their children; that they prepared catechisms and summaries of Scripture-doctrine for their instruction, and that the pastors made the religious education of the young a principal object of their unceasing care and attention. The Reformers, in their conflict with Rome, saw the importance of emancipating the human mind from ignorance, and of educating the people on scriptural principles. Especially did they recognize the solemn duty of

¹ See an excellent pamphlet, entitled, *Denominational Education in Parochial Schools and Religious Colleges, enforced upon every Church by Divine Authority*, by the Rev. Dr Smyth of Charleston, p. 10. Higher seminaries of learning, in the primitive age, as at Alexandria, were supported by the Church, and were presided over by eminent Christian scholars, whose business it was to expound and apply the Scriptures, instruct catechumens, and prepare labourers for the public work of the Church.

² Light in the darkness.

the Church providing for the religious training of all her members. The Churches of the Reformation, without exception, firmly maintained the obligation of the Church to maintain, under her own supervision and control, common and grammar schools, academies, colleges, and universities. In Geneva, France, Holland, and elsewhere, this was regarded as a principal care of the Church, and measures were adopted to place the education of the young on a right footing, and to maintain it in vigorous operation.

In Scotland, through the noble exertions of our Presbyterian forefathers, the religious education of the young was, from the earliest period, made a main part of the reformation that was aimed at, and happily established. The "godly upbringing of youth" was a principal ground of contending with civil rulers of the illustrious Knox. His declared design was, that every village and district of country should have a school, and every large city or town a college; and these were not only to be scriptural seminaries, but also to be under the exclusive superintendence and direction of the Church.¹ To the capacious mind of the reformer, and his earnest concern for the efficiency of the Church, and the welfare of the nation, we are indebted for the admirable *parochial school system*² of Scotland; and to

¹ M'Crie's *Life of Knox*, p. 250. The late Dr Chalmers (*Works*, vol. ii. pp. 143, 147) thus appropriately speaks of the sagacity and comprehensive views of Knox in the matter of education:—"When Knox came over from the school of Geneva, he brought its strict and, at that time, uncorrupted orthodoxy along with him; and with it he pervaded all the formularies of that church which was founded by him, and not only did it flame abroad from all our pulpits, but through our schools and our catechisms it was brought down to the boyhood of our land; and from one generation to another have our Scottish youth been familiarized to the sound of it from their very infancy; and unpromising as such a system of tuition might be, in the eye of the mere peasantry, certain it is, that, as the wholesale result, there has palpably come forth of it the most moral peasantry in Europe notwithstanding." . . . "To Knox we owe our present system of parochial education. By that scheme of ecclesiastical policy, a school was required for every parish; and had all its views been followed up, a college would have been erected in every notable town. On this inestimable service done to Scotland we surely do not need to expatiate. The very mention of it lights up an instant and enthusiastical approval in every bosom. And with all the veneration that is due, on other grounds, to our reformer, we hold it among the proudest glories of his name, that it stands associated with an institution which has spread abroad the light of a most beautiful moral decoration throughout all the hamlets of our land, and is dear to every Scottish heart, as are the piety and worth of its peasant families."

² We call the system *admirable*, which provides for the establishment of a scriptural school wherever there is a church, and which enjoins it as a special

this, and to parental instruction in families, the Scottish people are largely indebted for the force of character, morality, and religious purity by which they have been long distinguished among the nations.

Soon after its establishment in 1560, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland ordained that a *church school* should be erected in every parish, and that the teacher should be a pious, orthodox, and well-qualified man, fitted to instruct the youth in the Scriptures and Catechism, as well as in the elements of literature. In the Assembly of 1642, a grammar school was planted in every presbytery; and in the famous Assembly held in Glasgow in 1638, the acts of preceding assemblies were revised and ratified, by which visitations of colleges were directed to be kept by committees of the assembly; and the principal, regents, professors, masters, and doctors within the same were required to "be tried concerning their piety, soundness in the faith, their ability to discharge the duties of their calling, and the honesty of their conversation."¹

One of the Reformed Churches may be particularly referred to, as its earnest concern for the scriptural education of the young is more fully expressed in its public arrangements than that of some of the other churches. This was the Presbyterian Church of Holland. By its synodical assemblies, it is directed that the consistories, in every congregation, shall provide good schoolmasters, who shall be able not only to instruct children in reading, writing, grammar, and the liberal sciences, but also to teach them the Catechism and the first principles of religion. Every schoolmaster was required to subscribe the Belgic Confession of Faith, or the Heidelberg Catechism. A *threefold* instruction in the Catechism is enjoined—1. *Domestic*, by parents; 2. *Scholastic*, by schoolmasters; and 3. *Ecclesiastic*, by pastors, assisted by members of consistories. Those who are duty upon the ministry and office-bearers of the Church to superintend the education imparted; though we would not be understood as approving of the present administration of the parochial schools.

¹ See *Christian Education of the Children and Youth of the Presbyterian Church*, by Samuel Miller, D.D., pp. 13, 14. The authorized formularies of the Presbyterian Church speak of the teachers of youth, whether in the common schools or higher seminaries, as a kind of office-bearers in the Church, and as being objects of special interest to the Church. See *Second Book of Discipline*—"The office of doctor, or catechiser, is one of the two ordinary and perpetual functions that travail in the Word." "They are such properly who teach in schools, colleges, or universities." The Westminster divines say, "The Scripture doth hold out the name and title of *teacher*, as well as of the *pastor*."

appointed to inspect schools are enjoined to make the same an object of their chief care. No person was to be appointed to the charge of any school who was not a member in full communion with the Reformed Belgic Church, and who had not previously subscribed the Confession of Faith and Catechisms of the Church, and moreover solemnly promised to instruct the children committed to his care in the principles contained in the standards of the Church. And it was, furthermore, enjoined, that every schoolmaster shall employ *two days in every week*, not only in hearing the children repeat the Catechism, but in assisting them to understand it. To ensure fidelity in the teachers, it is declared to be the duty of the pastors and elders of each congregation frequently to visit the schools—to direct and encourage the teachers in the proper way of catechising—to examine the children with “mild severity,” and to excite them to industry and piety, by holy exhortations, seasonable commendations, and appropriate rewards.¹

These references manifestly show that the Church, in her purest times, was fully sensible of the great importance of a thorough religious education for her baptized members, and that the utmost pains were employed to have the instruction of the young under the supervision and control of the Church itself. If we would walk in the steps of illustrious forefathers—if we would be instrumental in training a godly and devoted race for the maintenance and diffusion of true religion, and be honoured to transmit the testimony and law left in Israel to succeeding generations, we should adopt the same course, and emulate the faithfulness and zeal of those who lifted up a standard for truth against powerful adversaries. To leave the education of her youthful members to others, over whom she has no control, is, on the part of the Church, to abandon one essential department of her duty, and one main element of her strength and hope. Christ's commission to his Church is, to “*teach all things whatsoever He has commanded* ;” and no plea of fewness, or want of means, will warrant a neglect of this primary duty. The primitive Churches, and subsequently the Churches of the Reformation, when they adopted measures for the “godly upbringing” of the young, and regarded, as under their control, not only the instructions of the family, but likewise the full education of children, the religious teaching and discipline of common schools, academies, and colleges, had

¹ See Miller on *The Christian Education of the Children and Youth of the Presbyterian Church*, pp. 16, 17.

but limited worldly means, and had, moreover, to contend with great difficulties. Were we to lay properly to heart the obligation of the baptismal engagement upon the whole Church, we would readily find means for furnishing a religious education to all the youth of the Church, and for extending it to others too. Thus, besides, would we be honoured to prepare a suitable and devoted instrumentality for promoting the Redeemer's glory in the earth, in teaching the nations to bow to his sceptre, and to know and obey whatsoever He has commanded.¹

4. When the *nature and design* of education are considered, the obligation of the baptismal engagement to provide it for the young, and to control and direct it, will be still further apparent. Whatever disputes have arisen on the subject of education, or on the province of the State in relation to the education of the people, it is now beginning to be generally admitted, that no system of mental training can be efficient for the ends designed, without being religious. Philosophers and literary men are now to be found declaring this, as well as divines; while the system that would divorce education from religion is losing favour with all who are capable of taking comprehensive views of the character of the human mind, or of the nature and destinies of human beings. An able writer justly remarks—"Education, to deserve the name, must be moulded and leavened in every part by the Word and Gospel of Christ. There is here no middle ground. A mere neutrality is impossible in its very nature. Education must be godly, or else it will be godless. What, indeed, is the true nature and purpose of Christian education? Nothing less, assuredly, than the training of immortal souls for an everlasting kingdom of glory. To profess to believe the Gospel, and still to aim at any lower object, is folly and madness. To impart some dry details of science or history is

¹ In this important matter, we may learn a lesson from adversaries. Many Roman Catholic parents instruct their children, at an early age, in the dogmas and superstitions of the Popish system, much more diligently than Protestants teach their children a purer faith. Numerous religious orders are set apart for the education of youth; and the *Frères Ignorantins, Christian Brothers and Nuns*, labour in this vocation with a zeal and assiduity worthy of a better cause. Many Roman Catholic congregations make and carry out arrangements by which the children among them shall be thoroughly imbued with the knowledge of Popish doctrines and usages, and by which their poor shall be visited and relieved. The consequence is, that Romanists generally are attached to their idolatrous and absurd system, and have an expertness in defending it, that puts to shame the ignorance and lukewarmness of many professed Protestants.

not to educate, in a Christian sense of the word. This is, indeed, a far higher and nobler work. It is by instruction and moral suasion, by discipline and prayer, to persuade men to secure those high ends for which they were created—to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever. The very drift and purpose of education cannot be seen without faith in the great doctrines and hopes of the Word of God. It must not be a training for this world only—an intellectual luxury that dazzles and deceives—but a training for immortal life; a moral discipline, of which the fruits will abide and endure for ever.”

Education, rightly understood, is the culture of the intellectual and moral nature of a human being. It aims not only to fit him for the business of this present life, but, regarding him as a rational, accountable, and immortal creature, it chiefly inculcates his duty to God, the Author of his being, and it brings him under a course of training suited to his future destiny. Education has been properly defined to be “*the progressive and harmonious development of all the intellectual and moral principles of our nature; the complete subjection of ourselves to the control of right principles; and the acquisition of all the knowledge that may be useful to enable us to fill well the sphere of duty in which our Creator has placed us, or to which He may call us.*”¹ To effect these important ends, education must embrace the culture of all the powers of the mind, the purifying and elevation of the conscience, and the improvement of the heart, and the proper application of the faculties of the body to whatever is useful, and becoming, and praiseworthy. The education which God has enjoined in his Word certainly contemplated such an extensive training. The late Dr Arnold of Rugby, referring to Deuteronomy xi. 19, justly remarks: “That the special thing to be taught was a knowledge of God’s statutes and ordinances; not the ten commandments only, not all the early history of their forefathers contained in the book of Genesis, but God’s law given to them his people; his will respecting them morally and politically, his will with regard to all the relations of private and public life—with regard to their government, their limits and divisions, their property real and personal, their rules of inheritance, their rules with regard to marriage—their whole conduct, in short, in peace and war, as men, as citizens. All this was laid down in their law; all this was to be carefully taught them in youth, that so, in whatever line of life they might be thrown, or whatever questions might

¹ *Denominational Education*, by Dr Smyth, p. 17.

be agitated, they might know what was God's will, and therefore might know and do their own duty." Applying these views to modern education, Dr Arnold adds: "Undoubtedly that is useless in education which does not enable a man to glorify God better in his way through life. But then, we are called upon to glorify Him in many various ways, according to our several callings and circumstances; and as we are to glorify Him both in our bodies and spirits, with all our faculties, both outward and inward, I cannot consider it unworthy either to render our body strong and active, or our understanding clear, rich, and versatile in its powers; I cannot reject from the range of religious education, whatever ministers to the perfection of our bodies and our minds, so long as, both in body and mind, in soul and spirit, we ourselves may be taught to minister to the service of God."

Education, while it overlooks no part of a man's constitution and welfare, must have a principal and primary regard to the interests of the soul; and its main efforts must be directed to the cultivation of the highest and noblest part of his nature. A useful writer¹ appropriately remarks on this subject: "In taking a Christian view of the objects of education, there can be no doubt that the first is to instil and cherish, in dependence on the Divine blessing, true religion, both in the soul and in the daily and hourly habits of life; and the second is, to convey general knowledge to form the mind and manners." Hence the moral renovation of the hearts of the young must be a leading object of all education that deserves the name of Christian. "What the mind needs is, not so much to be amended and improved, as renewed; not so much to be kept from falling into sin, as to be delivered from the reigning power and dominion of sin. And the great object to be promoted in every part of the education of youth is their renewal, their sanctification, and consequent salvation."²

Education, aiming at these high ends, and properly conducted, should labour at every step to induce proper habits, mental and moral, to impress upon the young a sense of their duty to God and accountability, and to make them early acquainted with their natural depravity, and with the future state of happiness or misery. The Divine and all-comprehensive precept in

¹ Babington.

² "As this life is a preparation for eternity, so is education a preparation for this life; and that education is alone valuable which answers these primary objects."—*Bishop Short.*

relation to the education of the young is, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it."¹ The word "train" here denotes to *catechise, initiate, or instruct*. The *objects* of this culture are not persons in mere childhood. The original term refers equally to young men and women. It embraces the whole period of human life up to manhood. "In the way," is literally, in the Hebrew, "even to the mouth of his way," and it therefore signifies, to the very *entrance* of his way in life. This training must have reference to talents and capacity, and is to be adapted to the preparation of youth for the mode of life which they are designed to follow. It is, moreover, to begin from the commencement, and continue to the end of education; and it comprehends all that is necessary for them, intellectually, morally, and spiritually. This course of training is specially enjoined upon God's people. It is the business of the Church of Christ; and she is under the most solemn and sacred obligation to provide that her children shall enjoy it from the earliest to the latest period of their life.²

It must be apparent to any reflecting mind that, to effect such training, all education must be *under the control of the Church*, and that it must be *throughout scriptural*. Christian parents have a principal concern in it. To them the Divine command is plain and pointed. They are to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; and while they rear them for usefulness in this world, they are to train them for God and for heaven. If they are necessitated to entrust a portion of the work to others, they must, notwithstanding, see—and the Church should co-operate with them in providing—that their whole education is conducted on Christian principles, that there is nothing in it to turn them aside from the way in which they should go; but, on the contrary, everything to secure that, even when they are old, they will not depart from it.

To accomplish the high ends of education, the Scriptures must be assumed as the basis of all instruction. The Word of God must be assigned the appropriate place of supreme authority in directing, controlling, and purifying education in all its departments. Direct instruction must be given in the

¹ Proverbs xxii. 6.

² For a very satisfactory view of the *objects* of Christian education, see an excellent little work, recently published by Messrs Johnstone & Hunter, Edinburgh, entitled, *Hints to Parents and Teachers on Christian Education in Schools*, pp. 28-40.

great truths of the Bible, as being the first and most important matters for a child to be made acquainted with ; and on other subjects, the authority of God speaking in his Word will be of paramount use in subduing the wayward spirit of youth, and impressing upon teachers and taught the duty and end of mental cultivation. The Scriptures alone bring fully into view the doctrine of human accountability, and show the young their fallen and degraded condition, and the Divine method of recovery through Christ. They exhibit the authority of *conscience*, and, in the hand of the Spirit, they are efficacious in purifying and elevating the moral principles. They furnish the *rule* and *standard* of all genuine morality ; and while they supply principles and rules for the business of human life, at the same time they point always to the world to come, as the ultimate destiny of an immortal being, and they subordinate all pursuits to the promotion of the Divine glory, and the attainment of happiness in God's presence in heaven for evermore. Such being the uses and power of the Scriptures, it is evidently irrational and preposterous to reject them in the great business of education ; and any system which aims to train the young without assigning the Scriptures their legitimate place and authority, must be essentially deficient, and must ultimately prove a miserable failure.

The training of children to mere mechanical operations, without cultivating right habits, does not deserve the name of education. Supplying food for the intellect, without aiming to eradicate the deep-rooted depravity of the moral nature, and to improve the heart, is to overlook the principal business of the culture of a human being, and must prove in the end of most mischievous consequence. A fundamental and essential part of education is, beyond a doubt, moral culture.¹ Without this, all other knowledge is vain and worthless—nay, it is positively hurtful and injurious. An excellent American writer,² and able advocate of scriptural education, well observes: “ To establish sufficient *moral principle*, there must be proposed *motives* to do it, convincing the mind and controlling the heart, superior at all times and in all circumstances over every possible motive to do wrong. To direct in moral *conduct*, there must be an exhibition by actual *example* of the highest moral perfection. All these can be found only in Christianity. Hence we affirm that though there are some auxiliary means, the BIBLE is fundamentally essential to the proper training of the

¹ See Appendix.

² Dr Bethune.

young. Every attempt to build a sound education, except upon evangelical truth, will be a failure. For, besides that the Holy Scripture is a library of itself, containing the most ancient, authentic, and satisfactory account of things in their causes, narrative the most simple and impressive, biography the most honest and useful, eloquence the most powerful and persuasive, poetry the most sublime and beautiful, argument the closest and most profound, politics the justest and most liberal, and religion pure from the throne of God ; it alone teaches morals with sufficient authority, motive, and example ; the authority of God, the motives of eternity, and the example of Jesus Christ, God in man."

The argument for employing the Scriptures as the basis of all education may be exhibited by transcribing a passage from the author's *Discourses on National Education* :—

" Emanating from the source of all wisdom and knowledge, the Bible informs us of the grandest and most important truths, with which, above all others, the young should possess an early acquaintance ; and by tracing effects to their proper causes, and conveying information in the most attractive manner, the Bible is admirably fitted to promote intellectual development. From this source, we have the only authentic account of the creation of the heavens and the earth, an account which natural discoveries have never, in a single instance, invalidated, but ever tended more powerfully to confirm and establish. To the Bible we are indebted for all our knowledge of the introduction of natural and moral evil into the world, and for a clear revelation of the Divine law and its sanctions. Herein we are informed of the birth of the world, the origin and early character of its inhabitants, the deluge, the dispersion of the human race, the origin of language and civil government, the institution and object of sacrifices, and the hopes and prospects of man for eternity. Here, too, is developed the wondrous scheme of God's condescension and love in redemption, that which 'angels desire to look into,' and which is destined to be the song and science of eternity. The vastness and variety of the subjects contained in the Sacred Volume stamp it with supreme importance. It deserves attention, as having for its Author the Father of lights, and as containing, emphatically, the truth, without any admixture of error ; and it claims our love as being the only means of discovering the way of life and immortality. Grand and noble in its subjects ; sublime and beautiful in its doctrines ; simple, eloquent, and attractive in its

language, it is fitted to make an impression on the minds of the young, which can be effected by nothing else ; and its instructions are adapted to persons in every relation to the wants and circumstances of all classes of the community. It exhibits the interests of time in connection with the concerns of eternity, and assigning the latter their paramount position, it provides for the efficient maintenance of the former. The duties of parent and child, of master and servant, of rulers and ruled, the rights and duties of citizens, and the only ground of national prosperity, are taught in the Scriptures with a clearness and fulness that are unequalled in any other volume that was ever penned.

“The Bible,” it has been well observed, “is a book of ‘useful knowledge.’ The information it conveys is adapted to the wants and circumstances of all classes of the community. Without an acquaintance with this book, the duties of a citizen cannot properly be fulfilled. Acknowledged by the nation to be a book of the highest authority, and appealed to, as it is in all our courts of justice, no man can justifiably take an oath who is ignorant of the book on which he swears. Sound *political knowledge*, in like manner, can never be obtained by a man who is ignorant of the Scriptures, for ‘the Bible furnishes *the only permanent basis for a just government.*’ It is the only book of universal authority which contains the charter of the subject’s rights ; which prescribes the limits of the ruler’s power ; which dares to give law to the legislator, and denounces penalties against the sovereigns of the earth. It presents a King who is above all kings, and a law which is paramount to every other law. It appoints a tribunal of appeal, to which the highest magistrate may be summoned, where power cannot overcome right, nor fraud pervert justice ; and where the unjust judgment of the oppressor will be brought upon his own head. It is the safeguard of freedom. The records of modern times do not present us with a single country blessed with free institutions, on whose permanence and happy influence we can now rely, in which the influence of the Bible is not exerted. In proportion as that has been wanting, the spirit of despotism has maintained its sway, and ignorance and apathy and slavery have been the portion of the people.”¹

“One peculiar and eminently excellent characteristic of the instruction of the Bible is, that it *produces moral purity*. Correcting the erroneous opinions of the young, and guarding them against the malign influences wherewith they are surrounded, it ever holds up before them the enormous evil and dreadful consequences of sin, and exhibits to them the surpassing beauty and certain happiness of a course of holy obedience. While it teaches children to love God, and to reverence and obey Him, by motives of the highest kind, it is of equal efficacy to inculcate relative duties, to correct every fault of the

¹ Dunn on *National Education*, p. 44.

young, and to check and eradicate the rank productions of nature. It furnishes no nutriment to pride, selfishness, anger, revenge, or any of the wicked desires of the heart. Being in direct opposition to everything corrupt and sinful, it is eminently fitted to be the guide of teachers, and a directory for youth. This is, indeed, the exclusive honour of the Bible, in its influence upon mankind in every relation. Illuminating man's moral and intellectual darkness, dissipating the shades of deep-seated ignorance and superstition, and dispelling the clouds of a false philosophy, it tends to banish crime from the countries where its light has been diffused, and to introduce virtue and happiness. It is the only book which has had power from God to change the character of nations, the book which 'abolished the bloody rites of Diana, threw down the polluted temples of Venus, terminated for ever the barbarous spectacles of Rome, and destroyed the blood-stained altars of the Druids.' In late years, it has achieved what philosophy and political wisdom could never accomplish—the emancipation of large portions of the human family from slavery, superstition, and cruel idolatry; and before it every system of darkness and oppression, in every part of the world, is destined yet to fall.

“Thus excellent and valuable as is the Bible, even when viewed irrespective of its grand office as a revelation of mercy, may we not infer that, instead of being shut out from places of instruction, or its admission conceded as a matter of favour, it should be better understood, and more constantly and thoroughly studied than any book whatever? Indeed, nothing valuable and important in education, when considered in its full extent, can be properly obtained but through the aid of the Scriptures of truth. It alone affords infallible direction concerning the cultivation of man's higher nature; it exhibits the rule of duty, and presents even to the minds of children the All-seeing eye and incontrollable authority of Jehovah. It furnishes effectual means for forming proper mental and moral habits, and it supplies a preparation for eternity. Subservient to these high purposes, which are fundamental to all right education, why is the instruction of God's Word rejected, and its authority contemned? Where else can we find so much true beauty, sublimity, and diversified and valuable information? Where is there else such a standard of taste—where a word fitted to exert such an influence in moulding the character and regulating the conduct? Nothing, we are persuaded, but the opposition of the natural heart to God and his truth, can account for the rejection of the Bible

from the guidance of popular education. Men love darkness rather than light, and refuse to come to the light, because their deeds are evil. Connected as they are with man's imperishable nature, and with his prospects for eternity, the truths of revelation are deserving of early and universal acceptance, and, compared with them, all other truths are but of secondary importance. The *decisions* of the Scripture on every subject on which it speaks are final and unalterable. Whether it erects a tribunal for judging of human conduct, warns of the evil of sin, inculcates the love of God and man, or displays the nature and rewards of holy obedience, it enforces its precepts with commanding and irresistible authority. By the most affecting motives, it constrains to the submission which it enjoins; and like as is said of the method by which its glorious Author rescues sinners from degradation and misery, it draws 'with cords of love and bands of a man.'

. . . . "As men of all classes absolutely need its lessons, so the Bible should have free course in the schools of youth; and its commanding authority should be acknowledged, from the humblest seminary to the most learned university. Owing to the reigning depravity of the human heart, education is fitted to become a powerful instrument of evil, if it is not purified and directed by the Holy Scriptures. What did education without the Bible do for France? It produced widespread and withering infidelity, and led to national perfidy and crime, to an extent hitherto unknown in the history of nations. And to take an illustration still nearer ourselves, education in the south of Ireland, where the Scriptures are excluded, has only served to prepare a people the better for the deeds of the demagogue and the incendiary, and to reduce society almost to complete disorganization. Contrast with the degraded condition of this portion of the population of this country that of the people of the northern province, and the difference is almost that between unsubdued barbarity and civilization. Inquire we the reason of this marked distinction, and we feel constrained to ascribe it, above all other modifying causes, to the want or the enjoyment of a scriptural education. Our Protestant fathers, when in poverty, or cherishing the truth amidst trial and persecution, maintained an unyielding regard to the Scriptures, as the foundation of law and the basis of all education. The heritage which they transmitted to us, at the expense of suffering and blood, has continued to yield countless blessings to their posterity; and while other parts of the

land are involved in darkness or polluted with crime, the northern province stands forth conspicuous, as a striking illustration of the advantage of a scriptural education.”¹

The VALUE of scriptural education might be illustrated by a variety of considerations ; but this, after the statements already made, is unnecessary. Men of the most different views and characters are constrained to do homage to the principle. Statesmen, however they may legislate for the instruction of the people on low views of expediency, are compelled to admit the excellence of Bible education.² Christian philanthropists see that, without such training, their plans for the amelioration of the human race must prove abortive ; and even the practice of those who are connected with idolatrous systems furnishes a powerful motive to lead Christians never to compromise the grand principle, but always to take the Scriptures as the basis and directory of all education. Heathen systems, such as the Brahminical and Buddhist in India, and that of Confucius in China, are maintained and perpetuated by the sacred books being taught in the schools, and the priesthood being the instructors of youth. The Koran is taught to all the youth in Mahometan countries. What a reproach that in many Christian lands, and especially in Protestant countries, where the purest faith is professed, the education in schools, higher and lower, from which the Scriptures are systematically excluded, should contrast so unfavourably with the early training of the young in Pagan countries, and of the followers of the Arabian impostor !

In India, the experiment has been tried of education without the Scriptures, and of instruction as founded on the Word of God, and has brought out most decisive results. In the Government schools and colleges, the system was adopted of furnishing to the natives a full course of education, but wholly unconnected with scriptural instruction, lest the prejudices of the Hindoos should be excited. The consequence has been that the educated youth of India, while their attachment to Brah-

¹ *The Duty of Nations favoured with Divine Revelation to promote Scriptural Education*, in two Discourses, pp. 68-72.

² It is worthy of remark, that though the Scriptures are excluded from the schools by the national system of education for Ireland, statesmen of all classes declare that they are to be employed in the schools supported by the State-funds in England. Even the eccentric Lord Brougham, in his place in the House of Lords, has pleaded that the Bible is not a sectarian book, and that its daily use in the schools should not be objected to by any who assume the name of Christian. Recently, Professor Huxley, in the London School Board, contended that the Bible is the best book for forming the morals of children.

minical idolatry is shaken, generally become infidel, and study with intense interest the writings of the most celebrated European deists and free-thinkers, in order to find weapons to assail Christianity. The eloquent pleadings and successful labours, on the other hand, of Dr Duff and his excellent fellow-labourers, have convincingly shown that mere secular education will never effect the removal of even the most absurd and monstrous superstitions, and that the civilization as well as the spiritual regeneration of India can only be hoped for from education conducted on thorough scriptural principles. ¹

5. If it is inquired, On whom the obligation arising from the baptismal engagement rests, to impart such an education to the youth of the Church? we reply—

(1.) It primarily and eminently devolves on CHRISTIAN PARENTS. The Divine command to them is, "Provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." ² Parents are the natural guardians of children, and they have the deepest interest in their training for future usefulness and happiness. From them their offspring derive a polluted nature, and from them they will learn, in the way of example, much of good or of evil, whether they attend to their education properly or neglect it. Parents are under the highest and most sacred obligations to instruct their children—to develop the principles of their minds, improve their hearts and consciences, imbue them with proper habits, and train them to subserve the great end of their existence. They are, in truth, the first and grand instrumentality in all that pertains to a right education of their children. Cherishing a due sense of their responsibility in this matter, they can do for their children what no other human beings can accomplish. Even with limited attainments and opportunities, if they are thoroughly alive to the importance of education, and attend to it with sustained energy and diligence, they will impart instruc-

¹ A similar testimony is borne by the results of education in the southern and western parts of Ireland. The youth of Munster, who have received a classical and mathematical education, unaccompanied by scriptural instruction, often become the leaders of secret societies, and the principals in perpetrating murders, and disturbing the peace of the country. It deserves, too, to be mentioned, that though several of the religious bodies that are employed in evangelical efforts in Connaught countenance the national system of education, which excludes the Bible from schools, they are compelled to establish scriptural schools in connection with their respective missions, as being those alone which can afford a proper training for the youth that are to be freed from the degrading bondage of superstition and idolatry.

² Ephesians vi. 4.

tions in childhood and youth, which will have more influence in moulding the character, and directing the future course of life, than any which their children will afterwards receive. Christian mothers have thus proved invaluable instructors of the young ; and to them the Church and the world have been largely indebted for unfolding and directing the mental powers of many that have been eminent for intellectual attainments, as well as for distinguished virtue, and for all that is beneficial to society. In the Sacred Scriptures are recorded many bright examples of maternal excellence, and fidelity in imparting instruction, in connection with the gracious habits and future devotedness of public servants of God.

Parents should regard themselves as responsible for the right training of their children—for the direction and control of their whole education, and as themselves called to be the first and chief agency in this important business. There are some of the most essential parts of education which they can never perform by proxy—which cannot properly be deputed to others. Christian parents, as having pledged solemn vows in behalf of their children, to educate them for God and his Church, should aim to be *painstaking* in this matter. They should consider the mental and moral training of their children as being eminently their work, for which they are before all others accountable. This is evidently of far higher concern than the things which only pertain to the body. No plea of want of ability, or of other necessary engagements, will exonerate parents from this duty. It is not high attainments, so much as a due sense of responsibility, and of the vast importance of the work, that will qualify parents for the right instruction of their children. Earnest anxiety for the spiritual welfare of their children ; diligent, painstaking, steady and persevering exertions, and faithful instructions, enforced by a consistent example, will accomplish what the highest abilities will fail to achieve, when such habits are wanting. It is an observable fact, that the best trained families are frequently those of parents in humble circumstances, and of moderate abilities, but who have been distinguished for true religion.

God designs that all parents should have time and opportunity for the work which He allots to them. They only require a will resolutely bent to seek, by all possible means, their children's welfare and usefulness. They should redeem time for this purpose, and, like the Israelitish parent, follow up the religious instruction of their children, when they sit in the

house, or walk by the way—when they lie down or rise up. Education thus commenced early, and pursued steadily, will, under the Divine blessing, mould the mind and induce good habits, as well as impart knowledge which will prove useful and abiding. As the twig is bent, such is the inclination of the tree; and according to the preparation of the soil, and the quality of the seed sown, so may we expect the future harvest.

Christian parents, above all, should ever regard themselves as charged with the *religious instruction* of their children. To promote this is a principal part of their sacramental vow; and without such instruction, neither can the moral evil of their nature be eradicated, nor the great end of their being answered. The religious training of the young is the paramount concern of parents, from which they cannot be relieved, and which every solemn consideration of duty and interest urges them to seek to accomplish. Expensive charitable establishments for education must fail of their object, when they remove the religious training of children from the hands of their parents; and even Sabbath-school teachers should aim to supplement the labours of parents, instead of superseding them. Ministers themselves are but helps to parents in the training of their children, and should co-operate with them in promoting their spiritual welfare and usefulness. They should ever impress on parents a sense of their responsibility, and in no respect, even in feeding the lambs of the flock, act as if they took the religious training of children out of the hands of their natural instructors, or made their work of secondary interest or importance. Christian fathers and mothers have the highest motives to charge themselves always with the religious education of their children. Where the means of grace are faithfully dispensed, it has been said that, in general, the conversion of the young may be traced to parental prayers, instructions, and example, and their edification and establishment to the ministry. What an important object this for Christian parents ever to set before them! What an encouragement to self-denying and diligent exertion—that they may be the means of rescuing their children from ruin, and of introducing them to the kingdom of God! A reward this of inestimable value—a blessing to children and an honour to themselves, compared with which, the riches and diadems of a universe are less than nothing and vanity.

Finally.—The engagement of Christian parents requires them to direct all other parts of their children's education on scriptural principles, and so as to subserve the advancement of God's

glory and their eternal salvation. Some parts of their children's education they may of necessity be called to depute to others. All parents are not able to teach their children all things which they need to know ; and some that have the ability have not the leisure from other necessary duties. Home education is not always the best, even where it is attainable. The schoolmaster in his place is as needful for the instruction of the young, as the parent himself or the minister. But as parents are accountable for leading their children in the whole way in which they should go, it is incumbent on them to see that, in those parts of their education which they depute to others, they choose proper instructors—guard against everything that is obstructive to right religious instruction, prepare them for serving God in the business of life, and aim to secure their souls' salvation. Many things that are comprised in a course of modern education, both in common schools, and in the higher seminaries, require the careful observation of Christian parents ; and not a few, as interfering with the religious discipline of the mind, if this attention were duly given, should be at once rejected.

After what we have said on the subject of scriptural education, it need scarcely be added, that parents, desirous of entertaining a due sense of their baptismal vow in behalf of their children, should always prefer scriptural seminaries for their children, and should see that all their education be based on the Word of God, directed by its authority, and imbued with its holy and purifying principles. The fear so strongly expressed by Luther, "that the higher seminaries from which the Bible was excluded might prove great gates to hell," may justly be entertained by Christian parents in our day. In many public institutions of learning, the Scriptures are not permitted to enter ; and while the youth, who, from their position, are afterwards to influence society, are trained for years to the study of the polluting fables and perverted morals of the heathen classics, and the intellect is educated, without any means being taken, either by parents or teachers, to improve the heart, or to impress upon the conscience the rule of duty, we need not wonder that many of the young so trained afterwards become sceptical or infidel in their principles, or callous to all religion, and depraved in their morals, and follow courses ruinous to themselves and pernicious to society. Let parents be timeously aware of the dangers to which their children are exposed, and sedulously watch, direct, and control all parts of their edu-

cation. Such attention will be eminently beneficial to themselves. It will expand their minds, give them a deeper sense of their responsibility, interest them in all their children's pursuits, and will prepare the rising youth for distinguished usefulness. Thus Christian parents may, either while living or after they have been removed by death, be honoured through their children, as Zebedee and his wife are named with distinction in the Scriptures, through their sons, the apostles of Christ. The reflex honour thus conferred upon parents by children over whom they have faithfully watched, and whom they have carefully trained, is the reward of fulfilling the baptismal engagement, and of discharging aright parental duties.

(2.) The obligation to educate aright the youth committed to her care, DEVOLVES LIKEWISE UPON THE CHURCH. The command to "teach" her children God's statutes, and to train them in the way in which they should go, is addressed to the Church. Her appointed mission is to "disciple all nations," and to make them acquainted with all things whatsoever Christ has commanded. The great duty of Christian education the world neither will nor can perform. We admit that the education of the young is an important office of the State, since the obligations and duties of citizens cannot be fully required or rightly performed while the young are allowed to grow up in ignorance, and are not trained to proper intellectual and moral habits. As long, however, as the State is not modelled according to the Word of God—while it is not, in the proper sense of the term, a CHRISTIAN STATE—it cannot educate the young on right principles, or for a right end. The nature and design of Christian education, as combining morals with religion at every step, as enforcing every duty by Divine authority, as aiming to eradicate the natural enmity of the heart, and as rendering every pursuit subservient to the promotion of God's glory, and the attainment of the soul's salvation, worldly statesmen will not appreciate, and they may not therefore be expected to educate the people on proper grounds. Something they may do to civilize and refine human society, and to promote intellectual knowledge and advancement; and these things, as long as the masses of society remain in rebellion against Christ, and reject his authority and laws, are not only useful, but necessary for the restraint and benefit of communities. But while civil states continue "kingdoms of this world," we are not warranted to expect from them any adequate provision for the Christian education of the young.

Whatever the civil power may claim to do in the business of State-education, it must be apparent to any who have duly considered the positive and frequent commands of the Scriptures, and the extensive import of the baptismal covenant, that the Church is solemnly charged by her Divine Head with the education of her baptized members. This can never be safely left to civil rulers to supply by a State provision, nor to school-masters, over whom the Church has no control, nor even to parents themselves exclusively. The Church is the nursing mother of a holy seed, and their godly upbringing is a legitimate and first object of her care. Hers it is to hold up the Bible as the true basis and manual of instruction, and to point to the Spirit of God as the only efficient Guide and Teacher, to fit and qualify the young to fill whatever sphere He has allotted them, for the glory of God, with benefit to themselves, and with advantage to the Church and to civil society. It is hers to instruct and direct Christian parents, in relation to the education of their children, and to take account of their performance of this important part of parental duties. There is much, besides, which the Church may and ought to do, in providing for, directing and controlling the whole education of her youthful members. No part of their education can she, without dereliction of solemn duty, consent to place beyond her supervision and control, or to leave altogether to those who cannot conduct it on right principles. Whenever the Church has declined from her "first love," become lukewarm, and ceased to do her first works, she has become indifferent to the proper training of the young. At least some parts of it she has—to ease herself of an arduous burden—contentedly left wholly to others, and manifested no concern on the subject. On the contrary, the sure indication of revival in the Church is a lively and jealous concern about the instruction of the young, no part of it being overlooked; and all the Church,—ministers, office-bearers, and members,—feeling a hearty personal interest in the matter.'

' Of the position that revival in the Church is indicated by an earnest attention to the scriptural education of the young, we have a striking illustration in the proceedings of the Free Church of Scotland, and in the recent history of the American Presbyterian Church. In the former case, amidst extraordinary efforts, requiring a vast expenditure, to sustain the ministry, build churches, erect manses, no less a sum than £50,000 has been raised in a few years to build school-houses; and a sum, amounting to several thousands, is contributed annually by the congregations of the Free Church to provide salaries for the teachers, support normal institutions, and sustain

The baptismal engagement certainly implies that when a pledge is exacted of parents to educate their children for God and for heaven, those to whom it is given will co-operate in the work. The baptized infant is not only dedicated to God, but is introduced to the Church, and entered there as in Christ's school, to be trained for his service, and to reflect his moral likeness, and the purity of his truth. When the name of God is named upon him, he is at the same time surnamed with the name of Israel; and the holy fellowship into which he is brought, in its very nature, requires that all who pertain to it should actively aid in bringing up a youthful immortal being, to walk worthy of God, and as an ornament and honour to the Church. Ministers and office-bearers in the Church are enjoined, as the test of their love to the Saviour, to *feed his lambs*. The members of the Church are to pray for them, guard them from evil, set before them a constant and attractive example of godliness, and always labour that they may realize the grand privilege promised to them that are born in Zion: "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children." *

Of the things which the Church may do for the education of the schools. It is most gratifying, too, to observe, that not only the *quantity* but the *quality* of the education furnished by the Free Church of Scotland is such as to meet the approval of those who contend for the religious training of the young. The Church regards herself as chargeable with the direction and supervision of the education of all the young committed to her care; the instruction communicated in the Free Church Schools is a sound literary education, based upon the Word of God—the religious character of the teachers is duly attended to—and leading men of the Free Church are nobly pleading for the establishment of a thorough scriptural, yet unsectarian system of National Education for Scotland. Since the disruption of the Presbyterian Church in America, in 1837, and the return of the orthodox portion to a nearer conformity to the Westminster Standards, and especially since the successful attempts of the Popish party in the State of New York to engross a part of the school fund, the Old School Presbyterian Assembly have taken vigorous measures to pervade the entire large body which they superintend with a thorough scriptural education. In their plan of parochial schools, they propose to have a school in each congregation, in which, besides the usual elementary instruction, instruction shall be daily given in the Scriptures and the Shorter Catechism; and to establish, likewise, in districts, higher seminaries, in which the more advanced youth shall be instructed in the Larger Catechism and the Confession of Faith. This is an example worthy of imitation everywhere. More vigorous and sustained efforts should be made by the Church, in the cause of scriptural education, to preserve her own baptized youth from evil influences that everywhere surround them, to train them for Christ's service, and to advance the kingdom of Christ throughout the world.

* Isaiah liv. 13.

the young within her pale, and which, by the baptismal covenant, we conceive she is solemnly bound to do,—things which are certainly practicable, and which cannot safely be neglected,—may be mentioned—

1. The care of the education of all her baptized youth should be constantly entertained. All those to whom the Church administers baptism she accepts as disciples, and virtually consents and vows to be their instructor. That they should be without knowledge it is not good. The meanest and poorest of her members must not be overlooked ; and no child should be suffered to grow up untaught, either in relation to Divine things, or to the acquirements which are requisite to fit him for the business of human life. Nor are the children of richer members to be left to follow education, without the Church seeing of what kind it is, and manifesting a tender concern in their progress and spiritual welfare. “Unsanctified human learning has done much harm in the Church,” was the weighty remark made by a venerable minister to Halyburton, when a boy at school, which sank into the youthful heart, and afterwards influenced the life of that excellent man. The godly Rutherford, writing to a Christian mother, a lady of rank, expresses, in one of his “Letters,” a desire to know the day that she would send her son to school, that he might seek for him to be taught by the Well-Beloved. The Church’s duty is to see that her youth be under proper instructors, and that the instructions given be conducive and not opposed to a “training in the way they should go.” It is not knowledge of every kind that can safely be imparted to children with corrupt natures, and surrounded by a world of temptation. The grand maxim of all right education is : “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom ; and to depart from evil, that is understanding.” The Church is bound to see that this is the beginning, middle, and end of the instruction of her baptized members. In such a good work, pleasant as it is profitable, should all co-operate. Expense should be cheerfully borne rather than that one child should be allowed to grow up uneducated. A lively interest taken by all in the instruction of the Church’s children would have the most salutary effects upon the young themselves. In increased moral influence, revival and extension, the Church would reap an abundant reward. Her sons would rise up, and with the characteristic attachment of disciples to a devoted instructor, would call her blessed. “Instead of the fathers,” she would take her “children, and make them princes throughout the earth.”¹

¹ Psalm xlv. 16.

2. It deserves to be seriously considered whether the office of doctor or teacher might not be advantageously revived in the Church. This is expressly enumerated among the ascension gifts of Christ, and among the orders of officers appointed in the Church (Ephes. iv. 11). It is joined with the stated ordinary office of "pastors," and not with such offices as were extraordinary. In the primitive Churches, doctors or teachers existed as a distinct order; and ecclesiastical history bears testimony to the value of their labours in the training of the young, and the diffusion of sound learning and scriptural knowledge. The order of doctors was recognized in the constitution and fundamental regulations of the Reformed Church of Scotland. In both the *First* and *Second Books of Discipline*, provision is made for the general establishment and maintenance of scriptural schools. The qualifications of the teachers of youth are declared; seminaries, higher and lower, are placed under the supervision of the Church; while the duty of the State, to co-operate in "the godly upbringing of the young, is prescribed and defined." The "doctor" is associated with the pastor in the instruction of the ignorant, and in maintaining the government and order of the Church. He is regarded as an "elder," and in relation to his special work, it is said, "Under the name and office of the doctor, we comprehend also the order in schools, colleges, and universities, which has been from time to time carefully maintained, as well among the Jews and Christians as among the profane nations."² It is evident from these statements, that our pious ancestors, in their laudable attempts to banish ignorance, and to imbue the whole community with sound learning and scriptural knowledge,

¹ In the opening of the seventh chapter of the *First Book of Discipline*, the following weighty statements are made respecting the necessity of schools for youth, and the nature of those which the Church should be careful to establish: "Seeing that God hath determined that his Kirk here on earth shall be taught not by angels but by men, and seeing that men are born ignorant of God, and of all godliness, and seeing also He ceases to illuminate men miraculously, suddenly changing them as He did the apostles and others in the primitive Kirk—of necessity it is that your honours be most careful for the virtuous education and godly upbringing of the youth of this realm, if either you now thirst unfeignedly for the advancement of Christ's glory, or yet desire the continuance of his benefits to the generation following; for as the youth must succeed to us, so we ought to be careful that they have knowledge and erudition, to profit and comfort that which ought to be most dear to us—to wit, the Kirk and spouse of our Lord Jesus."

² *Second Book of Discipline*, chap. v.

regarded the teachers of youth as men of a sacred character, and aimed to entrust the business of education to those alone over whom the Church had control, and in whom she had complete confidence. The doctors were required to be persons who gave evidence of possessing "the gift of knowledge," and among the most important of their functions, "the exposition and application of Sacred Scripture" is particularly specified.

It might subserve the most salutary purposes to have the same order still in existence in the Church. The character of the teacher will, to a great extent, influence for good or evil those who are entrusted to his care for instruction. Education being not the mere development of the intellectual faculties, or the mere acquisition of temporal knowledge, but the culture of the mind, and the training and elevation of the immortal nature, and laying as it does the foundation of all knowledge in scriptural and evangelical truth, can never be properly entrusted to those who are ignorant of the Gospel, and who have not an adequate sense of their solemn duties, and of the responsibility of their office.¹ The Church, it is evident, can alone fully judge of these qualifications; and as she has a vital interest in the manner in which the young are educated, she should see to entrust the matter into the hands of suitable persons, and to honour those who are employed in it. One of her most valuable labours is to raise up well-qualified teachers of youth, and to cast the purifying salt into the nurseries of learning. Men of scriptural principle and godly character, with high literary acquirements, placed over the schools, and doctors thoroughly fitted to expound and apply the Sacred Oracles in the higher seminaries, would be important auxiliaries to the Church in her great work of making known God's light and salvation to all nations. We have greater facilities and ampler means to obtain such instructors of youth, within the Church and under her control, than had our forefathers, when they cherished the noble design of making their native country distinguished among the nations for scriptural light and sound learning. All that we need is to be awakened to a due sense of our solemn obligations, and of the value and greatness of the work; and of the immense benefits that will

¹ This comprehensive view of the nature and design of education, and of the necessity of its being based on Scripture and evangelical principle, is taken by the late Prime Minister of England.—See Speech of the Earl of Derby in the House of Lords, Friday, Feb. 27, 1852.

result from its faithful performance, to the interests of the Church now, and to future generations.

3. The Church is specially under obligation to provide for the *education of her future ministry*, and for training subordinate agents for evangelistic labours. Christians are taught to regard the ministers of the Word as the "ascension-gifts" of the Saviour to his Church, as "the glory of Christ" and the "messengers of the Churches," and as "stars" in the Redeemer's right hand. To give a succession of such labourers is the fruit of the peculiar love of Christ to the Church as his mystical Body, and an evidence of his intense and unfailing care for her best interests. The members of the Church have important obligations to discharge in relation to the preparation of the ministry. While the Redeemer himself calls and qualifies his servants, and assigns them their posts of labour, the people who expect the blessing through such instrumentality are to seek the gift of approved labourers from Zion's exalted King, and they are to send them forth to their work, and yield them all encouragement and support in prosecuting it. The special injunction of the Saviour, as He directs the eyes of the disciples to fields white for the spiritual harvest, is, "Pray ye the Lord of the harvest, that He would send faithful labourers into his harvest."¹ To obey this command, and pray in a right spirit, we must feel the pressing urgency and importance of the work to be done, and the value of suitable labourers; and we must employ all proper means to prepare them for the service, and sustain them in it. Multitudes of able ministers of the Word, and faithful public labourers, are an eminent blessing to the Church; while a paucity of suitable instruments, and labourers destitute of suitable qualifications, are evidences of the Church being in a low state, and must be regarded as tokens, to some extent, of the Divine displeasure.

A principal duty involved in the baptismal engagement, on the part of the Church, is to seek prayerfully a succession of faithful labourers to administer ordinances, and to strengthen the stakes and lengthen the cords of the sanctuary. The ancient Church, even while enjoying the gift of prophecy, had "schools of the prophets;" and the inspired history supplies evidence that these were supported by public contributions, and that they were objects of deep interest to the faithful in Israel. The primitive Churches, in the early days of Christianity, regarded the preparation of youth for the ministry,

¹ Matthew ix. 38.

and calling them forth to labour, as one of her principal functions. All the Reformed Churches, without exception, directed early and constant attention to this matter. Higher seminaries, colleges, and universities were established, and supported liberally, for the training of labourers for the Church's public work. The most learned and devoted of God's servants were engaged as the instructors of youth who were designed for sacred offices: they were greatly honoured and liberally supported when employed in this work; and the Church generally indicated the liveliest concern for the adequate maintenance and efficiency of the public seminaries. By entertaining this conviction, by this prayerful painstaking, and by such liberality displayed in preparing labourers, the Church made successful inroads upon the kingdom of darkness, and achieved her noblest conquests.

If the Church in later times has not been distinguished by spiritual activity within her pale, nor by successful efforts for the propagation of religion in the world, this may be ascribed, in a great measure, to the want of a proper sense of the value of the ministry. Hence adequate means are withheld for training labourers, and for sending them out and supporting them in their work. Little care has been taken to enlist educated youth in the Church's public service. Some who are otherwise qualified, but are destitute of means for the acquisition of human learning, are not encouraged, and the education of candidates for the ministry is left almost wholly in the hands of those who are not amenable to the Church's authority, who have no right views of the magnitude or ends of the sacred office, and who are utterly disqualified to impart spiritual instruction. It need not be told how criminal and suicidal is a course of this kind. If the education of all her baptized youth is the solemn duty and proper business of the Church, much more is she under obligation to provide for the proper education of the ministry. The truth cannot be advanced in the world without a fit agency to declare it. The aids of human learning are needed, and previous preparation is absolutely required for the exposition and defence of the Gospel. If the Church lacks labourers for spreading the truth, and making known the light of her testimony throughout the nations, it is in consequence of her own sinful neglect. Alive to her own true interests, and seeking the blessing that is connected with holy zeal and prayerful activity, she should excite the young to give themselves to the Lord's public work, and provide all the means requisite for their care-

ful preparation. Training schools for labourers of different kinds she should establish, and place over them able and devoted instructors. Colleges and theological seminaries for candidates for the ministry may be provided even by sections of the Church that are not distinguished for the number of their members, or the possession of worldly riches.

The Waldenses—those early and eminent witnesses—trained many labourers, and sent them far beyond their native valleys to distant parts of Europe, to propagate evangelical truth, even when they were despoiled of their goods by ruthless persecutors. The “poor men of Lyons,” trained for their work by the liberality of Peter Waldo, had adequate human learning, and extensive acquaintance with the Scriptures, and were most devoted and successful instruments for the propagation of the Gospel. The “Academy” over which Calvin presided at Geneva could boast of no large means of support, and many others established by the Reformed Churches in France, Scotland, and elsewhere, although enjoying little worldly patronage or support, were yet eminent institutions for preparing devoted labourers for Christ’s service.

The Church must return and do her first works, if she would possess polished instruments for the great work of the world’s conversion. She must fervently pray the Lord of the harvest to send forth faithful labourers; she must encourage the young and others who appear suitable for the service; she must esteem it not a burden, but an honour and privilege, to provide for their training; she must enlist them in the service, assign them their fields of labour, and take a deep and prayerful interest in all their toils and trials and successes. This would be a beautiful exhibition of the Church’s sense of the obligation of the baptismal engagement respecting her youthful members, and an eminent means of fulfilling her high mission to make known God’s light and saving health to all nations.¹

¹ Hooker justly remarks, “That religion without the help of a spiritual ministry is unable to plant itself.”—*Eccl. Pol.*, b. v. ch. 6. Mosheim likewise observes, “That the best system of religion must necessarily either dwindle to nothing, or be egregiously corrupted, if it is not perpetually inculcated and explained by a regular and standing ministry.”—*Eccl. Hist.*, Cent. 1, p. ii. ch. 2. “Not even,” says Calvin, “is the light and heat of the sun, not even is meat and drink, so necessary for the support and cherishing of life, as the maintenance of the ministry of the Gospel Church on earth.”—*Institutes of Christ. Rel.*, lib. 4, c. 3.

CHAPTER IX.

IMPROVEMENT OF BAPTISM, AND ENCOURAGEMENTS ARISING FROM BAPTISMAL DEDICATION.

MATTHEW HENRY justly says : “ If infant baptism were more conscientiously improved, it would be less disputed.” An ordinance so fraught with spiritual meaning, and holding forth so manifold and eminent privileges as baptism, certainly demands of those who have been admitted to it a special improvement. Infants are unconscious of what is done for them at the time they are presented to God and his Church ; but as in the case of those who are born heirs to a valuable property, or destined early to an important and responsible station or office, so it is required that those who are claimed as “ God’s heritage ” should be early instructed in the nature of their high calling, and in its weighty obligations, and that they themselves should be led to improve aright their distinguished privileges. If the child of a good man, or the son of a distinguished scholar, or patriot, or philanthropist, is expected early to discover a sense of the advantages which he has enjoyed, and to walk worthy of his parent, how much more should those who, by their baptism, are separated from the rest of the world, and designated as children of God, walk worthy of Him who has called them to his kingdom and glory ! The first great matter to be taught the children of the Church, comprehensive of all that is most important for the young to know, is the nature and obligation of the covenant of their youth ; and the right improvement of their baptismal dedication may be said to be the beginning of all that is excellent in character, as it is the purification and elevation of their whole future life.

Our baptism should be specially improved, as it is an ordinance of grace ; and if no concern is entertained to realize the blessings which it is designed to convey, this will not only be justly reckoned sinful neglect and contempt of a holy institution, but will, besides, lead to the forfeiture of the benefits which it was appointed to confer. As implying, moreover, a professed

dedication to God, it must be the highest affront to the Divine Majesty virtually to deny his right to us, and practically to disown the solemn engagement.

Many, it is to be lamented, even in the visible Church, do not consider their obligation, and make no right improvement of their baptism. This arises from the low views that are prevalent respecting the ordinance itself. It is regarded merely as an external rite of long standing, to be observed from custom, or a sense of propriety, while its spiritual meaning is overlooked, and the obligation to improve it is not once considered. Others, again, view it as the assumption of a Christian name and profession, without having any right views as to what constitutes Christian character. And a large number, while they understand something of the nature and import of the ordinance, through the power of sin and the deceitfulness of the human heart, do not yield themselves to God, and have no real relish for the spiritual blessings of the covenant. The majority of professors, it is to be feared, rank in one or other of these classes. Hence their baptism is not improved, and instead of reaping from it eminent advantages, their neglect incurs deserved and aggravated Divine chastisements.

The due improvement of baptism, on the other hand, may be regarded as the first duty of the young who have been dedicated to God in infancy, and as embracing the whole subsequent course of a godly life. It brings with it early and eminent advantages, imparts a healthful tone to the spirit and disposition, and influences for good the future relations and conduct; and as being the fulfilment of sacred engagements, it opens the way to the enjoyment of manifold blessings. The due consideration of baptismal vows, and the desire early cherished to pay them, are the fruit of special Divine favour; and to act afterwards under the impression of being devoted to God, indicates the progress of the work of grace, and is followed by the happiest results.

The Westminster divines, in the answer to the 167th question of the Larger Catechism, give this significant and comprehensive account of the improvement of baptism:—
“The needful but much-neglected duty of improving our baptism is to be performed by us all our life long—especially in the time of temptation, and when we are present at the administration of it to others—by serious and thankful consideration of the nature of it, and the ends for which Christ instituted it, the privileges and benefits conferred and sealed

thereby, and our solemn vow made therein ; by being humbled for our sinful defilement, our falling short of and walking contrary to the grace of baptism and our engagements ; by growing up to assurance of pardon of sin, and of all other blessings sealed to us in that sacrament ; by drawing strength from the death and resurrection of Christ, into whom we are baptized, for the mortifying of sin, and quickening of grace ; and by endeavouring to live by faith, to have our conversation in holiness and righteousness, as those that have therein given up their names to Christ, and to walk in brotherly love, as being baptized by the same spirit into one body." From this admirable summary, it will be seen that Christian youth should be directed to consider the nature and design of their baptism as among the first and most important lessons which they should learn, or which are taught by serious reflection and an awakened conscience. Hence may they learn to appreciate aright the high privileges which are sealed to them in baptism, and may be led to feel the weight and obligation of sacred vows. Thus, too, the young may be brought to repent of "the errors of their youth," and be urged to escape from the wrath to come. By considering their ways in the light of baptismal engagements, they may be led to discern the necessity and excellence of the Gospel refuge, and be drawn to the Saviour lifted up. The great blessings of redemption shadowed forth and sealed in the sacrament of baptism may, by serious prayerful consideration of the ordinance, be seen in their unspeakable value, and become objects of earnest desire. This sacred rite supplies numerous and all-powerful motives to the cultivation of every holy disposition, and to the practice of the most important duties. By reflecting on our baptism, we are excited to humility, brotherly love, and active benevolence ; and from it we may derive spiritual comfort and the assurance of hope. In fine, the young, by due consideration of their baptism, may be made sensible of their obligation to the performance of all duty, and may derive incentives to the cultivation of universal holiness.

In improving their baptism, the children of professed Christians should—

I. COME EARLY TO SERIOUS REFLECTION, AND SHOULD BETIMES CONSIDER THE OBLIGATIONS ARISING FROM THEIR INFANTILE DEDICATION. Jewish children of the Old Testament Church are represented as inquiring at their parents respecting Divine ordinances—"What mean ye by this service?" and

parents are enjoined to be at special pains to give them full instruction on the subject. The inquiry implies that the minds of the young were early awakened to ponder the nature and design of religious institutions; and that parents, the natural instructors of their children, were to hold themselves ready to satisfy their craving for such information. Everything should be done to encourage the young of Christian parents to cherish the same spirit, and to propose similar inquiries concerning religious ordinances with which they are conversant. Parents, by directing the thoughts of their children to the character of Divine institutions, and by familiar explanations of their meaning and design, may excite such a spirit; and the young themselves should begin betimes to consider seriously their position, and what God designed for them, both in relation to privilege and duty, by bringing them into connection with holy ordinances. Children are generally characterized by an inquisitive disposition; and they are capable of receiving impressions from the administration of religious ordinances which they witness, and of understanding their import when properly explained, to a greater extent than is generally imagined. It is matter of observation, that very little children, when present at the public dispensation of baptism, have their attention arrested, and more frequently talk of the ordinance than of anything else that they witness on the occasion. This presents an opportunity which should never be allowed to pass, without telling children of their early dedication to God, and the meaning of the various parts of the ordinance, and without inculcating the duties and the powerful motives to their performance which it so admirably furnishes. To the young, awakened to serious reflection, nothing is better fitted to minister important instruction, and to impress the mind in favour of practical religion, than the ordinance of baptism. The thought of having been in infancy surrendered to God,—the grace and condescension of God in taking notice of creatures so helpless, and in appointing a solemn rite for them as a means of acceptance and blessing—the affecting view given in it of their natural guilt and defilement—the symbol of the Redeemer's precious blood—their dedication to God, and admission to the fellowship of his people—and the pledge given in the most solemn manner for their religious training,—all these, when duly pondered, are calculated to impress the youthful heart, and to enforce upon the young the obligation to be decidedly religious. The first right impulse of youth is to feel and say, "I am and must be

the Lord's ;" and nothing is better fitted to prompt them to such a decision, than due reflection on an ordinance in which they were devoted to God, and in which He, in the most condescending manner, claimed them as his. If there is any way in which an engagement to be the Lord's can be felt impressing the heart and conscience, none would appear to be better adapted than serious consideration of the baptismal covenant.

2. STRIVING AFTER CONVERSION, AND RENOUNCING YOUTHFUL VANITIES AND SINS. Baptism we have shown to be symbolical of regeneration. The washing with water points to the application of the blood of Christ, and forcibly reminds the baptized that they must be "born of water and of the Spirit," if they would enter the kingdom of God. In allusion to the element employed in the Christian rite, we are said to be "saved by the washing of regeneration, and renewal of the Holy Ghost."¹ As circumcision denoted "the putting away of the sins of the flesh," and the renovation of the heart, so baptism primarily refers to a spiritual change of heart and transformation of life ; and without a reference to such a change, it would be destitute of all proper meaning. The young should begin betimes to reflect upon their state, and to ponder the solemn inquiry whether they have passed from death unto life, or are yet dead in trespasses and sins. To an immortal being, at any stage of his history, this inquiry should appear most interesting and momentous. If unrenewed, he is guilty, condemned, and miserable, estranged from God, under the power of the destroyer, enslaved to his own heart's lusts, adding to his transgression daily, and advancing forward to the retribution of a lost eternity. If he has become the subject of renewing grace, he has been translated into the family of God, enlisted in a service the most ennobling, and rendered heir to a glorious and everlasting kingdom. There is no intermediate state. We are either aliens from God, and exposed to his dreadful wrath and curse, or we are spiritually risen with Christ, and "created anew unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them." Is there any subject that deserves the consideration of the young above this? Issues the most momentous, both for the present life and for the life to come, depend upon its settlement.

As long as the young remain unregenerate, they are rebels against God, and exposed to impending ruin ; if they continue in this condition, they must live unblest, and at death go to

¹ Titus iii. 5.

dwell with unquenchable burnings. On the other hand, the great change in conversion is the basis of all that is excellent in character, and conducts to the enjoyment of all happiness here and hereafter. Baptized youth should early lay to heart these things. They should plead with God, that as, by their baptism, they became *professedly* his, they may, by regeneration and adoption, become his in *reality*. They should think seriously how fearful it is to be "strangers from the covenant of promise," without God, and without hope in the world; and they should be in earnest in fleeing from the wrath to come. The scriptural agency and means of regeneration they should attentively consider and faithfully employ: cherishing, at the same time, the heartfelt concern that they may result in their translation from the power of darkness to the kingdom of God. They should earnestly plead for the Spirit to quicken; the Word should be prayerfully read as the instrument by which we become new creatures; and ordinances should be attended, as appointed means of grace and salvation. The evidences and fruits of regeneration should be frequently pondered; and the young should never rest satisfied till it is made clear to the conscience that "they are new creatures in Christ," that "old things are passed away, and all things are become new."

Baptism significantly expresses what is inseparable from regeneration—the renunciation of all ways of sin and departure from God. The "old man and his deeds" must be laid aside, if we would put on the "new man." By baptism, children are engaged to serve the Lord in newness of life. If we would be disciples of Christ, we must forget our father's house, and our own people—deny ourselves, and forsake all that we have. The young, remembering their baptismal covenant, and that they have taken the designation of children of God, must forsake youthful thoughtlessness and folly. They must give up former companions and pursuits, and having solemnly named Christ's name in their early dedication and subsequent recognition of it, they should "depart from all iniquity." All real honour and blessing are connected with such self-renunciation and holy separation. "Come out from among them, and be ye separate; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."¹ Although a separation from youthful follies and vain companions may take place, where there is no real change of heart, yet it is not unfrequently a preparation for the new birth, and a means, in the

¹ 2 Corinthians vi. 17, 18.

hand of the Spirit, conducing to regeneration. And when a person has been renewed, and taken into the family of God, the habitual renunciation of ways sinful or doubtful is one of the most clear and decisive evidences that he is the Lord's. "I thought upon my ways," &c. "Depart from me, all that are evildoers, for I purpose to obey the commandments of my God." "I am a companion to all them that fear and obey thee."¹

3. BY YIELDING THEMSELVES WHOLLY TO GOD, AND ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT IN HIS SERVICE. The baptismal rite, in every view of it, implies God's right of property and possession of those who partake of it. The promise, "I will be a God to thy seed," pertains to the children of believers. God graciously sets the seal of his covenant in their flesh, and claims them as specially his. A main part of a right improvement of the ordinance of baptism is for the young to recognize early God's right, and actually to devote themselves to Him. They are urged to this by the reiterated calls, commands, and promises of Holy Scripture. The Redeemer takes a peculiar interest in the lambs of the flock; and by the most affecting considerations and gracious offers allures them to Himself: "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?" "Yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God." "I love them that love me; and those that seek me early shall find me."² By such commands and assurances, the young are impressively taught that the great design of their early dedication was that they might be the Lord's, and that all their interest and honour lie in being devoted to his service. By baptism they were, like the infant Samuel, "lent to the Lord," and pledged, as long as they live, to be his. This relation is inconceivably dignified—this service honourable beyond expression. In allusion to the element used in baptism, and the mode of its application, the great promise of the Spirit is given to believers and their seed: "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring."³ The effect is a ready and joyful surrender of themselves to God. "One shall say, I am the Lord's." This self-dedication baptized youth should make early, and they should, in the whole course of their lives, evidence it by cheerfully and devotedly serving the Lord. The Hebrew servant who refused

¹ Ps. cxix. 59-63, 115.

² Jer. iii. 4; Rom. vi. 13; Prov. viii. 17.

³ Isa. xlv. 3.

to go free on the year of release, had his ear bored through with an awl, at the door-posts of the house, and remained a servant to his master for ever. Baptism significantly pledges its subjects to the service of the most glorious Master, in a similar manner. By voluntary consent and hearty recognition, the young come to the Church as pre-engaged servants, and in love to Christ declare that they are his to serve Him for ever. How blessed the relation to be a child of God—a servant of the King of Glory! How honourable his service! “If children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” His service is perfect freedom, and in keeping his commandments there is a great reward. Early decision on the Lord’s side, and active engagement in the work of promoting his glory, secure to the young a crown of honour, and are the path to the enjoyment of all blessing. Distinguished servants of God, such as Matthew Henry and Jonathan Edwards, Brainerd and Payson, have left behind them the record of eminent usefulness, as the blessing from above, which flowed from the early personal renewal of their baptismal dedication, and from their early devoting themselves to the service of God.

4. BAPTISM IS TO BE IMPROVED BY ITS SUBJECTS IN ALL THEIR SUBSEQUENT LIFE. There is no condition or event or circumstance of human life, in which the baptized may not draw from the covenant of their infancy motives for godly living—for Christian activity, support, and consolation. The baptized ought to confess with contrition of heart how remiss they have been, and how neglectful in improving their baptismal privileges and engagements. They should acknowledge, too, the condescension and faithfulness of God, in supplying them with valuable privileges, as resulting from their being claimed as his heritage, and the actual fulfilment of his promises to those who trust in Him. The whole life of faith may be promoted by a due consideration of the baptismal engagement. The young may derive strength for the mortification of sin and quickening of grace, from the death and resurrection of Christ, into which they were baptized.¹ Especially in the time of temptation, our baptism may be of singular use in resisting the tempter, and working for us deliverance. The proper improvement of the ordinance will enable us to overcome the world. By baptism, we have been brought out and become separate. God that claims them as his, is pledged to provide for the wants of his servants, and they may therefore serve Him without undue carefulness or

¹ Romans vi. 3-5.

fear. We have all reason to be content with the disposal of Divine Providence, and to be satisfied with his sovereign allotment. All is arranged in infinite wisdom, and must work together for good.

Thus, too, we may be enabled to resist the devil, to escape from his wiles, and to triumph over all his temptations and power. God has the exclusive right to us, and all that we are and have, as we have been in infancy given over to Him. When we are tempted to sin, we should remember that we have been called and appointed to be a holy and peculiar people. If we are tempted to doubt or despair, we should take encouragement from God's early claim, and the confirmation of his covenant given to us in our infancy. And if we are in danger of being drawn to indolence or neglect, we should call to mind that we were solemnly pledged before many witnesses to serve God with our bodies and spirits which are his.

In all afflictions and trials, we may from our baptism gather motives for support and comfort; and we may hence, too, grow up to a blessed assurance and joyful hope of salvation. Devoted and claimed as God's servants from the earliest years, we should aim to keep the fellowship of his Church—the one body into which we were baptized, and to abound in his service to the end. We may thus cherish the humble but joyful hope, that He who marked us early as his servants will preserve and sustain us in his work, accept of our feeble services, and fulfil to us his blessed Word, "Where I am, there shall my servant be."

In fine, all the duties of our holy religion will be more faithfully and vigorously performed when viewed in connection with the baptismal engagement, as all spiritual privileges will be thereby enhanced. The baptized are bound to the *daily prayerful study of the Word of God*, as they are called to walk by it as a light to their feet, and a lamp to their path. Thus alone will they learn to know all things whatsoever the Saviour has enjoined, that they may do his commandments—the great duty which is immediately connected with baptism. Prayer is inculcated as the grand business of life, as baptism presents the strongest motives and encouragements to the duty. God has special delight in the early prayers of the young. Josiah is commended, because he sought the Lord while his heart was yet tender. It is twice recorded of Samuel while a child, as worthy of special observation, that he "ministered to the Lord;" and it is added, "The Lord revealed himself to Samuel."¹

¹ 1 Samuel iii. 1, 21.

Children were baptized in the name of the Father, and therefore may they draw near to Him as a Father waiting to be gracious ; they were baptized in the name of the Son, who is their Advocate and Intercessor in prayer ; and they were baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost, who can help their infirmities, and make intercession for them with groanings that cannot be uttered. What encouragement is thus furnished to the young to pour out their hearts to God, and to expect the fulfilment of his gracious assurance, that "whatsoever they ask the Father in Christ's name shall be given them !" The duty of seeking early the fellowship of the Church, and of walking worthily in it, is also enjoined by baptism, for we are in baptism incorporated into one body, become the children of Zion, and are taught to seek all our "well-springs" there. To honour parents, and receive the counsels of religious instructors, is impressed on the young by their early dedication, as the due discharge of such duties lies at the foundation of all subsequent usefulness and happiness. Advancement in religious knowledge, growth in grace, and the cultivation of Christian tempers and dispositions, are likewise inculcated by baptism ; and impressive motives are supplied from this ordinance to walk in all holy obedience. Being itself a seal of the covenant, it opens the way to the enjoyment of all chartered spiritual privileges, as it serves to guarantee and confirm their possession. In it the God of all grace gives us "all things richly to enjoy." By significant symbols, He gives us Christ, and He virtually assures us that "with Him He will freely give us all things." Presenting to us a goodly heritage, and abundant spiritual provision, He says to the baptized, "Open thy mouth, and I will fill it." Brought to his house, and admitted to his table in his kingdom, they are encouraged to expect all the good of the covenant, as the ordinance of baptism supplies the strongest arguments to plead for its full enjoyment : "Lord, I am thine ; save me." "For the Lord God is a sun and shield : He will give grace and glory, and withhold no good thing."¹

The *motives* that should especially constrain the youth of the Church early to recognise their baptism, and to improve it by entering decidedly upon a religious life, are manifold and powerful. Of these, the following deserve to be seriously pondered :—

1. *The responsibility of baptized children is peculiarly solemn and weighty.* The enjoyment of spiritual privilege implies a special obligation to the duties of religion. The Divine rule of

¹ Psalm cxix. 94 ; lxxxiv. 11.

judgment is, "To whom much is given, from them shall much be required." The young of Christian families have been made partakers of privileges of no ordinary kind. They have been entrusted with many talents, and these the most valuable, and for their improvement they are solemnly responsible. They were born in Zion, and were subjects of prayer from the earliest period of their existence. By their baptism they were publicly devoted to God, and introduced into the number of his disciples. Sacred pledges were given and received for their religious training. From childhood, they have been instructed out of the Scriptures, which are able to make wise unto salvation, and have listened to the faithful preaching of the Gospel. They have been separated from the world lying in wickedness, and have united with God's people in the hallowed scenes of religious worship. Participation in such distinguished privileges entails a degree of responsibility on which it behoves the young frequently to reflect, and supplies the strongest motives to decision and activity in the works of religion. The misimprovement of these advantages will incur the high displeasure of Him who confers them, and must issue in aggravated misery. "Take the talent from him, and give it to him which hath ten talents; for unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath." "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."¹ If the young would escape this fearful doom, and obtain the reward of the faithful, they should always entertain a deep sense of their responsibility, and employ it as a propelling motive to lead them to Christian activity and devotedness.

2. *To defer to recognize the baptismal engagement is an aggravated sin, and of most dangerous consequence.* One of Satan's most powerful temptations, addressed to those who come in contact with the profession of religion, is to lead them to be undecided and to procrastinate. The youth of the Church are peculiarly assailed with it, and the principal and most potent devices of the enemy are employed to induce them to defer being religious till a future period. They are tempted to this by the indecision of others, and by the dread of the reproach of singularity. They entertain the idea, so congenial to the natural heart, that to be devoted to religion is incompatible with pleasure; and like the slothful servant, they say in

¹ Matthew xxv. 28-30.

their hearts, "I know thee, that thou art an austere man." All this is evil in itself, and is followed by the most disastrous consequences. It implies contempt of God's authority, it indicates the prevailing love of sin, it is an open refusal of the baptismal engagement, while the momentous concerns of the soul and eternity are suspended on an uncertain future. The danger of such a course is manifold. It cannot be but most displeasing to God. It is virtually saying to Him, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thee." Like Israel of old, the young who were admitted to the privilege of baptism thus declare they will have none of God. They prefer the love and pursuit of sin to his favour and service; and the proposal to repent and reform at some future period is, in reality, a rejection of the Divine claims upon the homage of the heart and life. Need it seem strange that those who act thus should be given up to their own hearts' lusts, and left to wander vainly in their own counsels?

The depravity of the nature, if not early checked, gathers strength and vigour with our growth. The mind gradually loses its delicacy of sentiment and feeling; conscience becomes callous, and the heart is hardened. If first warnings are unheeded, and early religious counsels are disobeyed, the heart is rendered less susceptible of receiving right impressions; religious restraints are readily thrown aside, and the individual is prepared for launching away into a career of folly and dissipation. Repentance and conversion become more improbable the longer they are deferred; and numerous mournful facts attest, that to the young acting thus, the enjoyment of salvation at any subsequent period becomes more hopeless. Given over to youthful lusts, on the indulgence of which their heart was bent, they become formalists or hypocrites, and at last are consigned to utter rejection and ruin. When the means of grace are faithfully dispensed, the larger number of those who are converted are awakened in youth. If, therefore, baptized children do not early profit by the preaching of the Word, and other religious privileges to which they have access, there is reason to fear that they may not afterwards be benefited. The young should take warning in time. The early and diligent improvement of baptism will save them from the rocks of danger on which others have split, and rescue them from the perils by which others have been overwhelmed in ruin. It may be the means of delivering them from death, and directing their steps to walk in the way of the living.

3. *Eminent advantages and privileges flow from the early recognition and improvement of baptism.* To be decided and earnest is a principal feature of mental and moral excellence, and is inseparable from success in attaining a desired object. Especially is decision in religion of inestimable value to the young. It is a shield against temptation; it moulds and elevates the character, and imparts a proper tone and direction to the pursuits of life. Spiritual as well as temporal blessings are the promised reward of youthful devotedness. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." Freedom from a state of irresolution and indecision is to the young no inconsiderable advantage.¹ And to be brought into fellowship with the friends of God,—to enjoy an interest in their prayers, and to be led, through intercourse with them, to acquaintance with heavenly objects, and to the holy exercises of religious worship, are benefits which baptized youth can never too highly appreciate. The young become useful by becoming pious. None others "serve their generation," but those who, devoting their hearts and lives to religion, serve it "by the will of God." The decided piety of children is the highest comfort and honour to Christian parents; it gladdens the hearts of ministers, and cheers the faithful who prefer the good of Zion to their chief earthly joy. It powerfully confutes the cavils of infidels, and silences gainsayers; and, not unfrequently, it has proved a blessed means of revival to the Church.

Substantial and enduring happiness will be found by the young inseparable from the due improvement of the baptismal engagement. Satisfied early with Divine mercy, they will rejoice all their days in God.² "*True religion is peace, comfort, and felicity; and separate from it, there is nothing that deserves the name of happiness.*" It cures the evils of the heart, by subduing and eradicating those disorderly passions and inclinations which create so much dissatisfaction and misery in human society. It confers "the witness of a good conscience," and enthrones in the heart the peace that "passeth all understanding." The

¹ It is the judicious remark of Foster, that "the decided man has this advantage above others, that he will bend circumstances to his will; and persons perceiving his inflexibility of purpose, will move out of his way to make room for him."—*Essays on Decision of Character.*

² Psalm xc. 15.

privileges, graces, and duties of religion are all sources of diversified and exalted pleasures—pleasures that never satiate nor weary, which no enemy or trial can take away. This is a happiness continually augmented, as the capacity for relishing and enjoying it expands. The pleasures of true religion are pleasures for life in all its changes and circumstances. They yield support and triumph in death ; and in the future world, in their vast increase and endless enjoyment, they become “rivers of pleasure, and joys at God’s right hand for evermore.” What powerful motives and encouragements have baptized youth, from all this, to improve their early dedication, by choosing deliberately God’s ways, and by resolving, like an illustrious servant of God, “never henceforward till they die, to act as if they were any way their own, but entirely and altogether God’s.”¹

¹ See *Resolutions* by President Edwards. These remarkable *Resolutions* were written when the author was only *twenty years* of age ; and being by him solemnly read and pondered once a-week, through all his subsequent life, may be said to have been the directory for living of that truly eminent man.

CHAPTER X.

ABUSES OF BAPTISM—NEGLECT—APOSTASY.

THE best things, through man's corruption, are liable to be perverted and abused; and when they are so, according to a received maxim, "they become the worst."¹ Among these, the ordinances and institutions of religion, though of Divine appointment, instead of being employed for holy ends, have been, through ignorance, misunderstood, and have been resorted to for purposes carnal, corrupt, and wicked. Of this perversion of holy ordinances we have a striking instance in the history of the Jewish Church, and an example still more marked in the Church of Rome—the antichristian apostasy of the New Testament. In the former case, a people that were peculiarly God's, and to whom pertained the adoption and the covenants—the giving of the law and the oracles of God—by overlooking the spiritual import of institutions which were given them of God, and by resting on the mere outward observance, to the neglect of moral purity of heart and life, became the embittered enemies of the Messiah, long-promised—the Hope of their nation, and the glorious Substance of all the typical rites that adumbrated his character, sufferings, and salvation. Every ordinance, even when they contended for its ritual observance, they misunderstood and perverted, and employed as a cloak to cover their wickedness, until they fell under the Divine displeasure, in its most fearful manifestation, and were utterly given up and rejected. The Apostle Paul, in the tenth chapter of First Corinthians, adduces the conduct of ancient Israel, in abusing holy ordinances, and the punishment which followed, as a terrific warning to Christians in all ages. The deliverance at the Red Sea, their consecration to the observance of the Mosaic ordinances, their protection and provision in the wilderness—all referring to things spiritual that are substantially exhibited in Christ and in the Gospel—are enumerated as their high and distinguishing privileges; and they are represented

¹ *Corruptio optimi pessima.*

as grossly abusing them, by lusting after evil things—idolatry, fornication, tempting Christ, and murmuring. The apostle then significantly and solemnly adds, as speaking to those who enjoy Gospel ordinances, “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.”¹ By the manifold corruptions of the Man of Sin, almost every ordinance of revealed religion has been polluted by human inventions, and applied for uses and ends altogether contrary to the scriptural institution. Even where the errors of the Romish apostasy are disavowed, institutions that are spiritual and of Divine prescription may be so abused by ignorance and unworthy motives, that, instead of being privileges and means of conferring spiritual benefit, they may degenerate into a mere outward form, and their observance may incur the Divine displeasure, rather than conduct to the enjoyment of a blessing.

The abuses of baptism in our day, in all sections of the Church, there is reason to fear, are manifold; and they are such as to demand the serious consideration of all who are concerned for the purity and efficacy of Divine ordinances. Some of them are so gross that they amount to a base prostitution of a holy sacrament; while others betray ignorance and culpable indifference in relation to matters of the highest importance. The blessing which the ordinance is designed to confer is not earnestly sought, and consequently is not enjoyed. In instances not a few, the profanation of a sacred institution draws upon those who are chargeable with it deserved rebuke and chastisement. The following may be noticed as instances of the perversion of the ordinance, which are too common throughout the churches, and whose consequences cannot fail to be most injurious:—

1. *Baptism is abused by superstition.* Where scriptural views are not entertained, and do not induce a godly practice, superstition will always more or less enslave the mind. The least inquiry and observation will satisfy a person, that even in Protestant churches superstitious notions are attached to the baptismal rite, and form to many the grand reason for its observance. By one class it is thought to purge away all original sin; others regard it as a kind of charm, of potent virtue, to preserve children from evil influence, and to protect

¹ 1 Corinthians x. 11, 12.

them from danger. Some cherish the idea that children unbaptized are under the power of evil spirits; while others think they cannot possibly be saved without baptism. The mere external rite is all that is thought about; the observance of it is conceived to bring with it some undefined blessing, or to ensure the safety, temporal and spiritual, of the child. Cases are even known where the only avowed object of ignorant parents in seeking baptism for their children is, that they may *thrive*. Such low and dishonourable ideas respecting a holy institution are not only opposed to all scriptural views on the subject, but tend to degrade it exceedingly. The slavery of superstition is one of the most powerful and debasing that holds in bondage the human mind. The person who is under its power must walk in darkness, and can never know solid peace, nor entertain a joyful hope. Of this we have a striking instance in Luther. When a monk, and while rigidly observing ascetic rules, and submitting to the severest bodily mortifications, he was kept in continual fear, and was at times truly miserable. Ministers and others, who have the religious instruction of the people entrusted to them, are deeply responsible for the prevalence of superstitious views in relation to baptism. These, it is to be feared, are generated by the indiscriminate admission of persons of all classes and characters to the ordinance, and by its careless or perfunctory administration. The nature and design of the institution are not taught, and the obligation of the sacramental vow is neither explained nor enforced. In such cases, the spiritual guides of the people are greatly to blame, and the complaint of the prophet has too significant an application to many Christian teachers in our day—"The leaders of this people cause them to err." "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."¹ The remedy for this abuse is the inculcation of scriptural views of baptism. All pains should be taken to instruct parents in relation to its connection with the covenant of grace, its spiritual significance, and the solemn duties as well as the high privileges which are implied in participation in the ordinance. The ignorant should, by all means, be deterred from coming to this sacrament until they have been instructed; and the least admixture of superstition should be eschewed as dishonouring to God, degrading to a sacred institution, and most pernicious to the applicants themselves.²

2. *Formality and worldliness* lead also to gross abuses of baptism. Akin to the superstitious observance of this ordin-

¹ Isaiah ix. 16; Hosea iv. 6.

² See Appendix.

ance, is that of attending to it as a mere outward form, or to subserve worldly advantages and ends. This latter abuse, however, may, and often does take place, even where the best doctrinal instructions are given, and where orthodox sentiments are entertained in regard to the institution. The evidence of a formal attendance on baptism is furnished by parents coming to it without any special preparation, and receiving it for their children without laying it to heart, or manifesting a due concern to perform solemn vows. Ministers, too, dispense the sacred rite without a due impression of its importance, or of its influence for good or evil upon those who receive it, and without special prayer for a blessing upon the administration. And it is painfully observable, that congregations of Christian worshippers witness the dispensation with little appearance of being suitably affected—of praying for a blessing, or of duly improving it for themselves or others. While special preparation is deemed necessary for the other sacrament, and its administration is accompanied with much apparent solemnity; the sacrament of baptism, which presents the same spiritual symbols, and is of unspeakable interest to all concerned—whether parents, the immortal being dedicated to God, or the Church in general—is attended upon as an outward form, without meaning, and from which no valuable results are to be expected. The ordinance, again, is frequently observed merely to maintain the worldly respectability of families. It has been virtually removed from the ordinances of the Church, and employed as an occasion of family festivity, or convivial intercourse. Spiritual benefits have been scarcely thought of at all. The fellowship and prayers of God's people have not been desired; and it cannot be expected that, from an ordinance thus administered, children will be afterwards reminded of their baptism, or taught from it their connection with the Church, or their responsibility to God. Such a way of observing baptism betrays irreverence and carnal-mindedness—is a mocking of God; and the result cannot be otherwise than the incurring of the Divine displeasure and the privation of all blessing. Formality in religious services indicates a spirit and character opposed to the Gospel. In a day when some profession of religion is looked for—and it would be reckoned disreputable to be wholly without it—individuals will have recourse to outward forms, and never think of looking beyond them to right dispositions of heart, or to the spiritual duties and privileges which they are designed to exhibit and inculcate. Observ-

ance of these forms is expected by others; it accredits our religious profession; the Church with which we are connected enjoins the baptism of children, and it would be thought singular if we neglected it. Perhaps, besides, the persons who take such low views think that there is some virtue in attending to the rite, and that God, on this account, will be well-pleased with them, and cannot fail to reward them. It need not be told how intrinsically evil such a spirit is, and of what dangerous consequence is its indulgence. The "form of godliness," while its power is denied or unknown, originates from pride and self-righteousness. From such as assume it, we are enjoined to "turn away," as they themselves are deluded to their ruin, and their example is contagious and destructive to others.¹ It should be our special concern, in attending upon all Divine ordinances, to worship "in spirit and truth," and to go beyond the outward form to Him who appointed them, and to the spiritual blessings which they are designed to communicate.

3. *The dogma of baptismal regeneration* is a grievous abuse of baptism. In the Popish Church, baptism is held to be indispensable to salvation; and the unbaptized are, without exception, consigned to eternal misery. Hence the laity, and even women, are allowed to administer baptism to infants who are in danger of dying, and even to dispense it to children before their birth. By the decree of the Council of Trent, the guilt of original sin is declared to be remitted by the grace of Christ bestowed in baptism;² and in the Catechism of the same Council it is affirmed, "Baptism washeth away the stains of sin;" and again, "The law of baptism extends to all, insomuch that unless they are regenerated through the grace of baptism, be their parents Christians or infidels, they are born to eternal misery and eternal destruction."³ These sentiments are so destitute of support from the Word of God, and are so repugnant at once to Christian feeling and to evangelical doctrine, that it is only necessary to state them to those who bow to the authority of the Scriptures, to ensure their rejection.

¹ Antipædobaptists, who declaim loudly against infant baptism as an empty form, are themselves open to the charge of *formality*, in strenuously maintaining that there is no baptism, where it is not administered to adults, and by immersion. Their whole system, by unduly exalting the *mode* to the undervaluing of the spiritual import of the ordinance, is justly chargeable with formality.

² *Concil. Trident.*, Sess. v., Canon 5.

³ *Cat. Council of Trent*, pp. 152, 162.

It is to be greatly deplored, however, that among Protestants, to a large extent, the same errors are substantially adopted, even when they are not openly avowed. Infants dying without baptism are regarded as in peril of ruin, or as actually lost; and hence the ignorant press to have baptism dispensed to children in such a case, though they have no proper notion of the nature and design of the ordinance, or of the solemn engagement which it implies. The Church of England, unhappily giving countenance to the Popish tenet that children dying unbaptized are out of the pale of salvation, enjoins the ordinance to be administered, in cases of emergency, by laymen and women. The doctrine of baptismal regeneration is too plainly countenanced, if it is not directly taught, by the formularies of the Prelatical Church, and is firmly maintained by a large number of her dignitaries and influential ministers.¹ Connected with this is the sentiment that the grace of baptism is inseparable from the administration of the ordinance by persons episcopally ordained; and that the sacraments, as dispensed by others, are invalid, and can convey no spiritual benefit. Few errors can be conceived more subversive of the truth of the Gospel, and of more destructive tendency, than these. Baptism thus ceases to be a significant symbol; and the mere outward sign is rested in, instead of the spiritual blessings which it denotes, and no anxiety is entertained respecting that change of heart which is indispensable to their enjoyment. This is a grievous, and it is to be feared, a fatal delusion. It places salvation in a mere ritual observance, and in connection with a particular section of the Church; and it accounts as of no value the moral renovation of the heart, and that holiness of life without which no man shall see the Lord.

To maintain, as the dogma of baptismal regeneration does, that men are made Christians by baptism, so that a future change by the Spirit is unnecessary, is utterly opposed to the proper nature and design of baptism, and contradicts the plainest declarations of the Scripture on the subject. Regeneration cannot surely consist in those things which are only outward signs of it, or instituted means for effecting it, for the *nature* of a benefit is plainly different from the *means* of attaining it. Baptism is only the external token of regeneration, or at most an ordained means towards its attainment; and it therefore subverts all right conceptions of the ordinance to

¹ See Appendix.

confound it with regeneration itself. The inspired writers speak of baptism as quite different from regeneration, and affirm the possibility of the external rite being observed, without a spiritual renewal of heart accompanying it. "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."¹ Here the external application for the cleansing of the flesh is distinguished from "the answer of a good conscience toward God," which is produced by the virtue of Christ's resurrection; and it is implied that the one may exist without the other, and that there is no salvation without the latter. In Galatians vi. 15, the Apostle Paul declares, that "in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth anything, but a new creature." By "circumcision" here is meant the whole system of Mosaic ordinances; and as these avail nothing, so by parity of reasoning, under the Gospel, no external ordinances avail for salvation without a new creature. They may be attended to and administered in due form, and be followed by no blessing. Without the renovation of the nature, evidenced by keeping the commandments of God, persons, though baptized, remain under the curse, and cannot inherit the kingdom of God. If baptism were either regeneration, or inseparable from it, then all that are duly baptized are, in consequence, regenerated, and may be expected to give evidence of the change in their lives. All observation and experience, however, contradict such a sentiment. Many who are baptized, even by those who boast of episcopal ordination, live ungodly lives, and die in their sins. Like Simon Magus, even after baptism, they remain in "the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity," and in death are "driven away in their wickedness."

To those who insist on the virtue of baptism being limited to its administration by a particular class of spiritual functionaries, it deserves to be mentioned that our Lord himself baptized not, but his disciples; and that the most distinguished of the apostles purposely abstained from personally administering baptism. In the case of Cornelius and his household, it is said, "Peter commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord."² The Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthian Church, declares: "I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; lest any should say that I had baptized in

¹ 1 Peter iii. 21.

² Acts x. 48.

mine own name." ¹ Thus is it recorded, and thus acted our Lord and his apostles, as if foreseeing the abuses of the latter times, in overvaluing the sacraments, and exalting them, as do the high Prelatists, above the ministry of the Word. The tenet of baptismal regeneration is the source of many other errors, and is of the most injurious practical tendency. Those who embrace it are led to regard their state as safe before God, and their final salvation as secure; any farther spiritual renovation of the heart and life is considered unnecessary, and to insist upon it is viewed as fanaticism and enthusiasm. The Word is not valued for its convincing and sanctifying influence. The rite of *confirmation* has a natural connection with the dogma of baptismal regeneration; and thus is it, too, that in the *burial service* of the Church of England, expressive and beautiful as employed about those who die in faith—the unwarranted and unscriptural hope is avowed of the "sure and certain" happiness and glorious resurrection even of those whose lives have been utterly ungodly. Those who hold the doctrine of baptismal regeneration discover the utmost intolerance; while its maintenance gives countenance to the saddest delusion. Any real reformation is hopeless as long as it is held; and it becomes, therefore, a sacred and incumbent duty to expose the gross and complicated error of this most unscriptural dogma, and to endeavour to rescue men everywhere from its pernicious influence.

4. Another abuse of baptism is *want of faith in it as a means of spiritual blessing*. This is opposed to a superstitious dependence upon the baptismal rite, and yet it is an abuse, evil in its nature, and productive of mischievous consequences. It originated in part from opposition to the Popish sentiment by which the sacraments are unduly exalted, or from want of scriptural acquaintance with the object of these ordinances, or with superficial knowledge of the instructions of the Word. Men prone to extremes teach that the sacraments are only signs of profession, or simple memorials of past transactions. Hence, no grace is sought or expected either in connection with the administration of baptism, or as flowing from it afterwards. The recorded sentiments of the most eminent reformers are completely opposed to this low view of the sacraments. Calvin expressly and pointedly teaches that the sacramental institutions are not merely badges of a Christian profession, but are instituted means of the grace of salvation. Luther insists on the necessity of faith to a right reception of the sacraments;

¹ 1 Corinthians i. 14, 15.

and in one of his letters¹ declares that "he would deny Christ who went to the sacrament without believing that he should obtain the grace which it was designed to confer." Our Scottish reformers declare, "We utterly condemn the vanity of those who affirm sacraments to be nothing but bare and naked signs."² The view which is thus repudiated leads to manifold evil. Blessings are not generally enjoyed which are not valued and earnestly sought. "Ye have not, because ye ask not." Baptism, rightly viewed, is a precious means of grace to parents. It is designed to strengthen their faith, animate their hope, and confirm to them the inheritance of all new covenant-blessings. To children, too, it is intended to be a means of blessing. What more natural than to believe and expect that in an ordinance appointed to bring infants near to Christ, some of them should even then, in the act of resigning them to an all-compassionate Saviour, obtain mercy? And it is every way rational as well as scriptural to believe that the "covenant of their youth" should afterwards be remembered to them for good. If we have no faith in the connection of such blessings with the ordinance of baptism, we will not seek them in the act of administration, and we are in danger of not obtaining the promised benefit. We should believe, on the contrary, in the divinely established connection between the instituted ordinance and the blessing. We should have recourse to it as one of "the wells of salvation;" and exercising gracious dispositions in waiting on its administration, we should desire and anticipate from it an increase of grace. Here may we experience that it is indeed "good to draw near to God." "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him."³

5. Among the worst abuses of this ordinance may be noticed, lastly, *neglect of proper improvement of it afterwards, and apostasy from baptism.* No ordinance of our holy religion is properly observed where a salutary impression does not remain afterward. Even where correct views concerning baptism are entertained, and solemn emotions are experienced at the time of its dispensation, if it is not reflected on afterwards, and if care is not taken by parents to improve it for themselves

¹ Dated November 29, 1518.

² The sentiment which is thus rejected is that which was maintained by Waterland. It is substantially taught by Orme in his work on the *Lord's Supper*; and by Dr Halley in his *Lectures on the Sacraments*.

³ Hebrews xi. 6.

and for their children, its special design is overlooked, and the spiritual benefit of the ordinance cannot be realized. That must be regarded as a formal service in religion which does not purify and elevate the spirit, and lead to a godly practice. Especially does such a solemn rite as baptism demand, after waiting on its administration, frequent prayerful reflection, and a life devoted to the work of religion. Parents profess, in the baptism of their children, to take hold of God's covenant, and to renew their own act of personal dedication. They pledge themselves to walk in a perfect way within their house; and by the faithful performance of all religious duties, and a consistent Christian example, to train their families to the practice of godliness. It is too apparent that many come under such solemn engagements, and do not consider them afterwards; at least, their subsequent conduct plainly declares that they have either made vows without due consideration, or only to forget and violate them. The cases, it is believed, are not rare in which parents, coming away from the solemn ordinance, hardly once allude to it in their families; and give no evidence, either in their devotional exercises in their households, or in their spirit and conduct, that they have been engaged in a service of peculiar solemnity and importance, or that they derive from it any superadded obligation to holy living. Where the ordinance is not improved to greater prayerfulness, watchfulness, activity, and diligence in all duties, personal and domestic, it is certainly abused. The effect of such inconsiderateness and neglect must be very pernicious to parents themselves and to their families. Vows repeated without a due sense of their solemnity, and a dread of Him to whom they are made, tend to sear the conscience and harden the heart, and can hardly fail gradually to obliterate a sense of moral obligation, and to render the person a formalist or hypocrite in religion. The members of a family, observing the spirit and conduct of a parent unimproved after he has been employed in the most solemn religious service, will naturally be led to regard attendance on ordinances as a mere formal matter—either to be kept up or neglected, as convenience or interest may dictate.

Such a grievous abuse is, we fear, common among religious professors in our day; and to this may be traced not a little of what is so painfully observable—that the ordinance of baptism brings with it so little real spiritual benefit to families. Parents, in guarding against an evil so flagrant and aggravated,

should improve the baptism of their children to deepen their sense of the obligation of sacred vows, and to promote spirituality and devotedness in all religious duties. They should, besides, improve the ordinance—by feeling the momentous nature of their charge in relation to their children, by fervent prayer and earnest endeavours for their children's salvation, and by training them early and constantly in accordance with the baptismal engagement. Baptized youth, too, should be aware that their baptism is by them abused when they do not begin betimes seriously to consider it, and to act as persons who have been dedicated wholly to God. The neglect of the young to recognize their baptism when they arrive at years of judgment, indicates a heart at enmity with God and averse to religion. If indulged in, it cannot fail to provoke the Divine displeasure, and to expose to retributive vengeance. Where God's claims upon the young are not acknowledged, and the privileges conferred on them in infancy and childhood are undervalued or contemned, there can be no blessing. They that *despise* God shall be "lightly esteemed." The tendency of this early neglect is to open apostasy from the profession and vows made in baptism. The deplorable character of such a result cannot be adequately declared. We shudder at what is recorded of Julian the apostate, who when advanced to mature youth, bathed himself in the blood of an animal that was offered in sacrifice to Jupiter, that he might wash off his baptism. Yet not a few of the young of Christian families as really proclaim their apostasy from a Christian profession sealed in baptism, when they refuse to join themselves to the Lord's people, and when they give themselves over to youthful follies and lusts. The course of apostasy, whether openly avowed or disguised, can only be evil, and the end is death. Refusing to own God's paramount claims, or to recognize their early vows, the young reject all that is really good for the present life, or for the world to come. Useful, in the proper sense of the term, they cannot be; the blessing from on high they cannot enjoy. Against God none can ever harden himself and prosper. In the end, all who apostatize from baptismal engagements will be constrained to own the power and vengeance of the Saviour whom they despised—like Julian, who, when mortally wounded in the war with the Parthians, exclaimed, as he threw up into the air his blood collected into his helmet: "O Galilean! thou hast conquered."

The excellent Archbishop Usher noted in his time the following abuses connected with baptism—many of which characterize the spirit and conduct of professors in our own day:—

“The main care and preparation is about matters of outward pomp and state. Everything is fitted and prepared for the purpose, but only that which should chiefly be, viz., the hearts and minds of those that go about a business of that nature. While the sacrament is in performing, the demeanour of many show that they have a slight opinion of that service; some turning their backs upon it, and going out of the Church, so soon as the sermon is done, as if the Word was worth the minding, but not the sacrament; others prating and talking all the while, as if there were nothing for them to learn by, and no duty for them to perform in that action. Lastly, infants are brought to the sacrament of baptism in their infancy, but are never by their parents taught the doctrine of baptism, when they come to years of understanding. Baptism is not made use of as it ought in the whole course of men’s lives. These things show that men commonly have a mean conceit of this ordinance.”

To prevent or remedy such abuses—alike dishonourable to the Institutor of the ordinance, subversive of its design, and injurious to those who observe it—scriptural views of the nature and ends of baptism should be plainly and frequently inculcated. The best way of guarding against error is to teach the truth; and those who are entrusted with the Gospel are under a solemn responsibility to declare with all fidelity and diligence its principles, that holy ordinances may be preserved incorrupt, and that those who wait on their administration may give the answer of a good conscience in the sight of God. Fixed solemn meditation on the spiritual objects which baptism presents will also be a means of preventing and remedying abuses. Above all, the Holy Spirit should be earnestly sought, both by those who dispense the ordinance and by those who wait on its dispensation. He alone can inspire right spiritual views, bring the heart into a proper frame, and make the saving application of the great truths which are symbolically taught in the ordinance. The Spirit is the “unction whereby we understand all things”—and the “baptism of the Spirit” as with fire, will infallibly rectify abuses, destroy corruptions, enkindle a glow of holy desires and affections in the sacred service, and impel afterwards to devoted obedience. In fine, setting about the

immediate performance of baptismal engagements, and constantly keeping them in devout remembrance, will prevent future abuse, and preserve from formality and apostasy. All that are concerned for the Divine honour, and that value the purity of the Church, and the prevalence of true religion, are bound to contribute by their utmost exertions to preserve from corruption the institutions of the sanctuary ; and thus to prevent evils which are of incalculable extent, whether as affecting individuals, or the Church, or civil communities.

CHAPTER XI.

SPECIAL DIRECTIONS TO PERSONS CONCERNED IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF BAPTISM.

THE ordinance of baptism, when duly administered, is calculated to furnish important *practical lessons* to the several parties who are interested more or less nearly in its administration. If the views which have been already advanced in this treatise are correct, then this sacrament is at once a means of conferring the highest and most precious privileges, and of exciting to the performance of the most solemn duties, both personal and relative. It exhibits a sealed charter of a blessed inheritance, while it presents manifold obligations to all holy living; and were the privileges of baptism duly improved, and its obligation properly felt, it could not fail to promote whatever is pure and lovely and of good report in human society.

We notice briefly a few classes to whom baptism suggests weighty practical considerations, and addresses special directions:

I. THE MINISTERS AND OFFICE-BEARERS OF THE CHURCH HAVE A PECULIAR INTEREST IN THIS ORDINANCE. To them is entrusted the dispensation of those institutions which are appointed by Zion's King for the manifestation of his glory, and for communicating spiritual blessings to the heirs of salvation. In executing a trust so sacred and important, it deeply concerns them to have an approved character, to bring to the service a right frame of mind, and to act with all fidelity. The fire of Divine jealousy burns hot near the altar; and God loudly proclaims to all who would approach it, "I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified." ¹

The seals of the covenant in a peculiar manner require cleanness of hands and purity of heart in those that administer them. They should cherish a godly fear lest they profane holy ordinances themselves, and thus mar the communication of the blessing, and lest they should countenance the profanation of

¹ Leviticus x. 3.

them by others. Upon them rests a most weighty responsibility; and if low perverted views of the ordinances of religion are entertained, and they are abused for unworthy ends, the fault will generally be traceable to the ministers and office-bearers of the Church. They have not been at pains to teach the people; they administer ordinances in a formal and perfunctory manner; and for low, interested purposes, they admit unworthy persons to a participation in the seals of the covenant. The consequence is, that men are lulled in fatal security and delusion in relation to their spiritual state—the sacraments are profaned, and subsequent improvement of them is not to be expected.

To preserve baptism from such perversion and abuse, and to render it a means of edification and blessing, the authorized teachers and rulers of the Church should—

(1.) *Give full scriptural instructions* on the subject. The Divine Word exhibits clearly the nature and design of the seals of the covenant; and full statements concerning their spiritual import, and the qualifications of those who have the right to partake of them, are contained both in the Old and New Testaments. These the ministers of the Word should fully expound and faithfully apply; while the other office-bearers of the Church should labour to enforce such instructions, so that no ignorant or unworthy person be admitted to the holy ordinance. The public administration of baptism furnishes a suitable occasion for a full exhibition of its nature and spiritual significancy, as well as for impressing the solemn obligation which it entails. The catechizing of the young, and their admission to the fellowship of the Church, should be improved by giving instructions concerning the baptismal engagement; and all pains should be taken to make parents and the baptized youth of the Church aware of the value of the privilege to which they have been admitted, and of the nature of that holy devotedness by which they should be characterized. Instructions in relation to baptism, when properly given, are fitted to be eminently useful. They must of necessity embrace the grand truths of our holy religion; and as the ordinance contains an affecting display of the Divine condescension; and an attractive manifestation of the covenant of redemption, and of the grace and love of the Saviour, these instructions may be imparted so as to excite more than ordinary interest, and in such a manner as to make salutary and lasting impressions.¹ In general, it should be

¹ As baptism should never be administered in a hasty or careless manner, it might greatly conduce to its profitable observance to have stated times for

adopted, as a rule, never to admit an ignorant person to the participation of baptism for himself or for his child. Parents should be carefully instructed in the nature of solemn vows before they are required to make them, as well as frequently reminded of them afterwards. Spiritual advantages of the highest kind will accrue to the Church from a course of scriptural instruction, and from the exercise of faithful discipline, in guarding against the abuse of the rite of initiation, as the neglect of either is too evidently fraught with consequences to its purity and efficacy, which are in the highest degree injurious.

(2.) *All care and solemnity in the administration.* Where ignorance prevails respecting the nature and spiritual meaning of baptism, and no special instructions are given on the subject, it will generally be found that the ordinance is administered in a hasty, formal manner, so as to manifest no right state of feeling in the administrator, and so as to produce no proper impression either on those to whom it is administered, or on others who may witness the administration. This is not only the case when baptism is dispensed in private, when worldly business and conversation are scarcely suspended for a few minutes, while an immortal being is impressed with the seal of God's covenant, or when the rite is hurried over, to make way for the convivial entertainment that is to follow. Not unfrequently, in the public congregation, baptism is dispensed with very little observable solemnity. It is brought in at the end of a service, perhaps already sufficiently protracted, hurried over, with a few remarks, often controversial, or merely doctrinal; while neither minister, nor parents, nor spectators are concerned to realize the Divine presence, nor to be aware of the unspeakably momentous nature of the transaction.

Christian ministers, in dispensing this seal of the covenant, should themselves seek special preparation for the service. They should entertain clear and scriptural views of the sacred symbols, and of their connection with the spiritual objects which they represent. They should cherish the compassion of the Saviour, when He commanded infants to be brought to

its administration in the congregation, such as on a particular Sabbath in the month. Parents should take care to notify their purpose to seek baptism for their children sometime previously to the administration, both that the minister himself may have his mind prepared for the important service, and that the opportunity may be afforded for fuller instructions in relation to the institution.

Him, and when He took them up in his arms and blessed them.¹ The exercises of mind and the public act of parents in offering their children to God, the condition of the immortal being baptized, its dedication to God and his service, the introduction of a member to the fellowship of Christ's Church, its consignment to a pastor as a lamb of his flock, the naming upon it of the Triune name, the application of the sacred symbol of the mysteries of redemption, the impressing of the seal and confirmation of the covenant, and the thought of the important consequences that must result from the baptismal rite, of good or of evil, and for time and eternity—all these must deeply affect the mind of a devoted minister, and lead him with all solemnity and fidelity to discharge this act of his ministerial commission. He should come to the service in the spirit of fervent prayer, of ardent love to souls, and of heartfelt reliance upon the promise of the Saviour's gracious presence and blessing. With all plainness and fidelity, and searching application, should he deal with parents. The little immortal to be baptized should be an object of the deepest interest. The minister, in receiving it to the ordinance, becomes the instrument of adding to the number of the professed disciples of Christ. Besides, he not only executes the Saviour's will and commission, he *imitates* his tender compassion towards little children.

His earnest concern should be to bring them to the arms of the Redeemer himself, that He may effectually bless them. Infants are no less the objects of the Father's everlasting love, and of the Saviour's purchase, than adults. Their future character and usefulness, their happiness or misery, are intimately connected with their early dedication, and these momentous matters should be vividly before the mind of the minister when administering the ordinance. The *covenanted privileges* of infant children should be regarded as greatly important, and their baptismal dedication to God should be taken as a special occasion to seek the gracious presence of the glorious One who claims them as his, and who seals to them his deed of precious privilege. To a faithful minister, few opportunities can ever occur more suitable than the administration of baptism for conveying weighty instructions to a congregation. The great

¹ In some of the Reformed Churches on the Continent, it is usual for the minister, in dispensing baptism, to take the child into his arms, while he invokes the Divine blessing, and pronounces the words of dedication. Some Dissenting ministers in England, too, are in the habit, in the act of baptizing, to take the infant in one arm, and sprinkle the water with the other hand.

doctrines and privileges of Christianity may be exhibited in the most affecting and impressive manner from this ordinance, and chiefly in their practical tendency. The fundamental articles of original sin, the covenant of redemption, justifying, regenerating, and sanctifying grace, the sinner's unspeakable need of Christ and of the Spirit's work, adoption into God's family, fellowship in the visible Church, with the obligations to all new obedience, are therein strikingly exhibited. From such an ordinance, the faithful pastor cannot fail to educe instructions on the great matters of faith and Christian practice, and to enforce them with all solemnity and earnestness.

With what advantage, too, may he address parents, urging them to pray for their children, to labour for their conversion, to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, to train them for Christ's service here, as they desire and expect to meet with them in his presence in glory! Seldom will the servant of God enjoy a more favourable opportunity for reaching the heart of parents; and eagerly should he embrace it for making impressions that may be permanent, and to excite to important duties which are too generally neglected. It is recorded of Matthew Henry, the expositor, that he laboured by appropriate discourses to render the dispensation of baptism by him a service of special solemnity and spiritual profit to those to whom he administered it, and that many of these long afterwards remembered the occasions with peculiar interest, and regarded it as an eminent means of blessing. The administration of baptism should still be thus characterized, and thus might it be rendered a means of blessing, not only to parents and families, but likewise to the whole Church.

(3.) Ministers should afterwards manifest *tender and watchful concern about baptized children*. When the risen Saviour demanded a test of supreme love from Peter, and from all his future ministers, He placed it in the thrice-repeated command, "Feed my sheep"—"Feed my lambs." Ministers should regard the baptized youth of the Church as *the lambs* of the flock; and they will evince their love to Christ, and their devotedness to his service, by faithfully feeding them. As pastors, they should discover towards them special tenderness and lively concern. They should bear them on their spirits, and earnestly recommend them in prayer to the Chief Shepherd. They should impart to them instructions in Divine things—adapting them to their age and capacity—and should endeavour, by condescending familiarity and sympathy, to speak to the

heart and conscience at a time when the young are peculiarly susceptible of tender impressions.

Upon the OFFICE-BEARERS of the Church devolve, to a large extent, the great duty of training the young, even in childhood, in the way in which they should go. Many parents, even of those who make a Christian profession, are, in a great measure, ignorant of the nature, design, and obligations of baptism. It is the office of ministers to teach such, to excite them to a faithful discharge of parental duties, and to aid them in bringing up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. The young, too, require to be instructed in relation to the great duty of recognizing and improving their baptism; and this, in a great measure, is the appropriate work of ministers and other office-bearers in the Church. The superintendence of classes of children of the Church for catechizing, familiar scriptural exposition and prayer, should be regarded as a special and indispensable part of the pastoral care; and the direction of the Sabbath-school, and the employment of the young in active efforts for the spread of the Gospel, and in other labours of Christian benevolence, will prove not less a happy means of enabling them to fulfil their baptismal engagement, than of strengthening the ministry and reviving the Church.

By manifesting tenderness and unremitting care, ministers and other public persons in the Church may greatly benefit the youth that have been committed to them in baptism.¹ This is indeed a work which, while it will always characterize a devoted ministry, is eminently calculated to benefit the Church, and to promote the cause of true religion. The "testimony and law" left in Israel is, by such means, transmitted from one generation to another; and race thus declares to race God's wondrous works. The work itself, though arduous, is at once encouraging and delightful. Baptism supplies the most suitable and powerful motives to address the susceptible minds of the young, and may furnish instructions to them at once diversified and most important.

By manifesting an interest in their welfare, and entering into their juvenile thoughts and feelings, faithful instructors come to be regarded by them as their benefactors and

¹ Ruling elders in the Church might be most usefully employed in considering baptized children and mature youth as objects of their prayerful and constant concern, and by conducting scriptural classes for their instruction. This duty is exhibited and enforced in the excellent work of Dr King on the *Eldership*.

most endeared friends. Not unfrequently the young learn to imitate those who are their loved teachers; and thus a diligent and devoted minister may mould after his own moral and spiritual habits those whom he prayerfully instructs, and may reproduce his own mental likeness in those whom he was desirous of leading in the good and right way. Baptized youth are the future hopes of the Church. On them it depends, in a great measure, to maintain her ordinances pure and entire—to exemplify the power of true religion, and to propagate the testimony of Christ. The times that are now passing over the Church, and the eventful periods of her future history, demand peculiar concern about the young, and urge those who would advance the Redeemer's cause to take more than ordinary interest in their spiritual training. They have dangers of no common magnitude to encounter in these last times, and duties the most important to perform. If they grow up ignorant of their baptismal vow, and unwilling to fulfil it, the cause with which they are connected must retrograde and fall into decay. If, on the other hand, they early range themselves on the Lord's side, and devote themselves to his service, they will become instruments of eminent blessing to the Church, and through them, the cause of truth and godliness will be advanced, and achieve its brightest triumphs. With such views and prospects, let ministers and office-bearers in the Church improve their opportunity with the young, and faithfully "occupy" this valuable talent. This work rightly performed will ensure an abundant reward. *"Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth."* *"I will make an everlasting covenant with them. And their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring among the people: all that see them shall acknowledge them, that they are the seed which the Lord hath blessed."*¹

In prosecuting such a work, we become *eminently like Christ*; and we train and prepare those who are to perpetuate his cause, and transmit his truth to future generations. How important this labour! What an unspeakable honour to be herein co-workers with God! How benign and valuable are its results!

2. The MEMBERS OF CHRISTIAN CONGREGATIONS, being witnesses of the administration of baptism, have special duties to perform at the time, and may gather from the occasion valuable lessons for future godly practice.

Those who witness the dispensation of baptism should ever

¹ Psalm xlv. 16; Isaiah lxi. 8, 9.

regard it with a feeling of deep solemnity and reverence and heartfelt interest. All levity and carelessness should be considered as most unsuitable to the occasion, and as a high provocation. The public administration of this ordinance should be regarded as an important privilege to a Christian assembly, and as demanding from the members of the Church the performance of peculiar duties. It furnishes an affecting and impressive display of the fundamental truths of our holy religion. These truths, whether declared in words, or presented in embodied representation, should always be received with fixed attention and profound interest. In baptism, they are exhibited with special application to the soul, regarded as guilty and polluted, and to a human being in the infancy of its existence. They are thus taught in a manner fitted to impress the mind with the deepest sense of their momentous nature and practical importance. It seems almost impossible that any person who has felt the value of the great things of salvation for himself, can witness the dispensation of this sacred rite without being led by it to the more cordial belief and more fervent love of the truths of the Gospel.

What a striking exhibition does baptism make of the Divine goodness toward infant children, and of the sovereignty, freeness, and all-sufficiency of God's grace towards helpless human creatures! The infant child is the emblem of weakness, want, and unworthiness, and yet God does not overlook it in its low condition: He even condescends to embrace it in the arms of his mercy. How impressively does this illustrate the grand fundamental principle of the Gospel—"By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."¹ How affectingly does it exhibit the triumph of Divine mercy over man's guilt and unworthiness, and display the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards creatures most undeserving and helpless!

In the condition of infancy, the distinctions that afterwards exist among human beings are unknown. The child of the peasant and the sovereign are here on a level. The most distinguished of mortals are by nature helpless and morally depraved; and no rank in society, or place however exalted, has any power to remove the guilt or pollution of sin. The grace that is illustriously though symbolically displayed in baptism, is freely offered to the lowest child of poverty, equally as to the infant inhabitant of a palace. In view of this

¹ Ephesians ii. 8.

wondrous manifestation, should we not exclaim with devout gratitude and joyful hearts, "Who is like unto the Lord our God, who dwelleth on high, who humbleth Himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth! He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that He may set him with princes, even with the princes of his people. . . . Praise ye the Lord."¹ While witnessing the celebration of the baptismal rite, we should *be brought to feel our own obligations to sovereign grace*. We must receive the kingdom of heaven as a free gift bestowed on the undeserving, if we would receive it at all. To come to glory, we must first be the subjects of grace. If we receive not the kingdom of heaven "as a little child," we shall in nowise enter therein—and this not only in putting on dispositions resembling those of a little child, but in being introduced in a way analogous to that in which infants are admitted to the seal of the covenant. We are *passive* in the hands of Divine mercy in obtaining the pardon of guilt, and the spiritual renovation of the nature. Like an infant cast out in the day of its birth, and ready to perish, we are lying in our blood, unable to help ourselves, and none to pity or relieve us. If we are rescued from ruin, the compassionate Saviour passes by us in mercy, and our time is a time of love. He spreads the skirt of his garment over us, enters into covenant with us, and says to us, Live. Should we not admire this marvellous grace, and learn from the baptismal rite to cherish a heartfelt sense of our obligation to serve and delight in Him who loved us and gave Himself for us?

By baptism, an infant member is publicly added to the Church, and a Christian congregation is laid under obligation to special duties by this act of admission. They should cherish a lively interest in the parents, and should aid them by their fervent prayers. They should concur in the solemn dedication of the infants to God; and bearing them on their spirits, they should seek to be instrumental in bringing them to Christ, and in committing them to his arms for a blessing. The pledge solemnly tendered for their religious education, and accepted by the Church, imposes upon its members an obligation to contribute to their future training in the way they should go. Baptized children are committed to the Church as their nursing mother, and every faithful minister should lay to heart the weighty trust; and by prayers, counsel,

¹ Psalm cxiii. 5-9.

and example, should aim to fulfil it. Every instance of baptism should be regarded by the members of the Church as calling them to more entire devotedness to God's service, and especially to promote its holy fellowship by labouring constantly for the spiritual welfare of fellow-members—infantile or others.¹

Finally. SPECTATORS OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF BAPTISM should be particularly reminded of their own baptismal covenant; and should be excited to *seek earnestly the privileges which it holds forth, and to perform the duties to which it obliges.* No opportunity is more fitted to realize our own early dedication to God, than when we witness the surrender of an infant child to God in baptism. We, too, had the name of a Triune God named upon us, and He set upon us the seal of his covenant, and claimed us as his. We may have enjoyed at the time the earnest prayers of godly parents, as the public prayers of the congregation were likewise offered in our behalf; and we certainly had an interest in the spiritual desires of the Lord's people who were present at the administration. Reflection upon such high privileges should lead to serious self-examination. We should inquire whether we have felt and acknowledged our obligation to be the Lord's, and have taken hold of his covenant. We should ask our hearts whether we have been duly sensible of our natural guilt and defilement, and have fled to the blood of Christ for pardon and cleansing. Our baptism was a significant emblem of regeneration, and we should be urged to a careful trial whether we have yet been the subjects of this great change. We have been marked with the Divine name, engaged to be the Lord's, and pledged to walk before Him in newness of life. It behoves us to inquire seriously and diligently whether we have felt the weight of this obligation, and whether we have given evidence of it in holiness of life. We are called to eminent privileges in baptism. The fellowship of God's Church—a new covenant relation to God himself, justification, adoption, sanctification, and an inheritance with the saints in light—these are freely offered to us, and our baptism is the appointed symbol and sign of being confirmed in their possession. When we witness the dispensation of baptism, we should be stirred up to examine whether the gracious design of the ordinance has yet

¹ In one section of the Church (the Reformed Presbyterian) in which baptism is, almost without exception, dispensed in public, on the Sabbath in which the rite is administered, we know it to be common to offer up special prayers in domestic worship, in behalf of the parents and the children that have been baptized. This laudable practice is worthy of being generally adopted.

been accomplished in us, or whether we are still unacquainted with these things. We should entertain a deep sense of the value and excellency of this high privilege, and should eagerly pant after its enjoyment. "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." We are "begotten again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away."¹

How earnestly should the members of a congregation, in witnessing the administration of baptism, *desire the baptism of the Holy Ghost!* This would cleanse them from sin, quicken them in all duty, and cause their hearts to burn with love to God and man. It would be a blessed revival to the Church, in which "dry bones" would be quickened, and saints would be animated to go on their way rejoicing. For ourselves individually, we should gather from witnessing the baptism of others, that we are solemnly obliged to "keep the whole law." We should feel that we are required to exercise ourselves daily to have "a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men." Ourselves we should yield anew to God, and our members as instruments of righteousness unto holiness. With enlarged hearts, we should run in the path of the Divine commandments. Joyfully calling to mind our vows, we should declare, as we betake ourselves to all the duties of a godly life, "Thy vows are upon me, O God: I will render praise to thee." "O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid." "One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand to the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel."²

3. CHRISTIAN PARENTS have a special call to improve the baptism of their children. The occasion should be regarded by them as a marked and important era of their history—as a season of special value to themselves and their families. To a godly parent, who has formed a right estimate of the salvation of his child, there cannot but be felt a very deep interest in the act of his solemn dedication to God, and of his public recognition as a member of the Church. Having prayed for his child as soon as it had existence, and rejoiced with trembling in an immortal creature being lent him of the Lord at its birth, he cannot but regard it as a high privilege to consecrate publicly his infant offspring to the Lord, and to obtain for it the visible seal and confirmation of his covenant. To the faith of

¹ Romans viii. 17; 1 Peter, i. 3, 4. ² Psalm lvi. 12; cxvi. 16; Isaiah xlv. 5.

a godly parent, baptism is the King of Zion claiming his child as specially his, and enrolling his name in a charter of the highest privileges. By this rite, moreover, the connection of the children of the faithful with the Church is openly ratified, and all the benefits which such a relation confers are declared to be theirs. They obtain a place and a name within Zion's walls, better than that of sons and daughters. They are incorporated with God's people—the most excellent community on earth—and are admitted to an interest in their prayers, and to a participation in their exalted privileges. No believing parent can be indifferent to such a distinction either for himself or his child. As Joseph, though filling a high station in the palace of Pharaoh, brought his two sons to his aged father for a blessing, and preferred to have them called by his name, and incorporated with God's people, to their ranking as princes in Egypt, so a faithful parent will regard the fellowship of his children with the Church of Christ as above all earthly honour. While he may wonder at the providence by which he has been brought into the parental relation, he will receive the ordinance of baptism for his child with devout thanksgiving.

God, may a believing parent say, has presented Himself to me as a God in covenant, and has not only said He will be a God to me, but to my seed after me. Is not this a wonder of goodness and mercy? That He should take notice of one so vile and worthless, is amazing condescension; but that, moreover, He should take such a guilty sinful creature into a covenant relation with Himself, and give him a personal interest in all his attributes, promises, and fulness, is wonderful beyond expression or conception. "Who am I, Lord God? and what is my house?" "And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?"¹ And then it is an additional act of Divine favour, and one most affecting to a godly parent, that the same glorious Being should declare, "*I will be a God to thy seed after thee.*" How matchless the grace that stoops down to regard my infant child! How unspeakable the privilege of having my helpless little one interested in the same covenant of peace, and in having infinite love and mercy, and almighty power pledged to protect, provide for, and bless it! From me it inherits a polluted nature, and it is under the primeval curse. In itself it is helpless, and exposed to a thousand dangers. Yet, notwithstanding, the God of salvation not merely notices in pity my tender babe, He brings near his covenant and salvation, spreads over it the

¹ 2 Samuel vii. 18, 19.

robe of righteousness, and says to it in the most impressive manner, Live! With what lively gratitude and heartfelt thankfulness should a Christian parent contemplate these precious privileges, and appropriate them to himself and his offspring. The excellent Matthew Henry suitably remarks: "Much of the mercy of having children lies in this, that they have them to devote to God; not only a seed to be accounted to *us*, but to be *accounted to the Lord for a generation.*"¹ Not only to honour us, and to bear up our names, but to honour God, and to bear up *his* name in the world. What is an estate or office good for, but to glorify God with it, and that we may have something to lay out, and use for his honour? Bless God that he has not only given you a child, but that He hath invited and encouraged you to give it to Him again, and is pleased to accept of it. Be thankful that you have a child, admitted from its birth into the bosom of the Church, and under the wing of the Divine Majesty. Hannah had been long barren, and it was her great grief. At length God gave her Samuel; but it doth not appear that *his birth* was so much the matter of her praise, as his *dedication* to the Lord. When she had brought him in his infancy to the tabernacle, then it was that she said, '*My soul rejoiceth in the Lord.*'² You have more reason to be thankful that you have a child born to inherit the *privileges of the covenant*, than if you had a child born to inherit the largest estate. . . . Rightly understand the nature and intention of the ordinance, and you will say with wonder and praise, '*This is none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven.*' This gate of the Lord into which the just shall enter! Enter into it, therefore, with *thanksgiving*, and into his courts with *praise*. Your children are polluted, but bless God there is a *fountain opened*, not only for the house of David, but for the inhabitants of Jerusalem.³ Draw water, therefore, with joy out of these *wells of salvation*. Rejoice that there is such a covenant, which you can, through grace, lay claim to. The expressions of joy and rejoicing *at the baptism of a child* should be turned into this channel; and should terminate in God, and in the new covenant."⁴

Again. A Christian parent should, at the dispensation of baptism, *take hold of God's covenant*, and fully surrender himself and his offspring to be the Lord's. The encouraging proposal, "I will be a God to thee," contains the offer of the best

¹ Ps. xxii. 30.

² 1 Sam. i. 28; ii. 1.

³ Zech. xiii. 1.

⁴ Henry's *Treatise on Baptism*, Complete Works, pp. 235-238.

portion and the largest inheritance to a parent; while the accompanying declaration, "I will be a God to thy seed after thee," holds out a share in the same invaluable privileges to his infant seed. Of this gracious promise, baptism is the appointed seal; and it is brought near that it may be appropriated, and that the blessings which it exhibits may be claimed and enjoyed. Coming to the "Mediator of the new covenant" is represented as among the chief privileges of the Gospel. All blessings are guaranteed to "the son of the stranger" that "joins himself to the Lord, and that takes hold of his covenant." This, which was the rest and hope of the dying monarch of Israel, is still the support and confidence of every believing parent. "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure."¹ It enhances the high privilege exceedingly to a godly parent that his infant seed are embraced in the same blessed compact of mercy, and that, through sovereign grace, the same exalted privileges which are his heritage for aye, are presented and guaranteed to them likewise.

His special employment should be, when approaching in baptism to the Mediator and to the symbol of the blood of the covenant, to appropriate the gracious provision to himself, and to claim it for his offspring. Here must rest all his hopes, and on this ground he is encouraged to offer up his fervent prayers. Accepting for himself the purchased blessings of redemption, and acquiescing in the covenant as the sealed charter of their enjoyment, he should, at the same time, seek and claim a covenanted inheritance for his child too. In the baptismal act, he should bring him to the Mediator of the covenant for life and salvation—to the blood of the covenant for cleansing, and to the Spirit of the covenant for renovation of heart and life. His grand concern ought to be that the soul of his child should be bound up in the bundle of life with the Lord, and that his name may be inscribed in the Lamb's book of life; as all his desire concerning himself should be that he enjoy a lot in the covenant—sanctified and blessed in this life, and in the world to come. An aged minister once said to his wife and daughter, as they stood at his death-bed: "I have nothing to leave you but the promise and blessing of a covenant-God, and that is enough." This, too, will appear to every godly parent an all-satisfying portion for his children. When devoting them to God in baptism, he should be affected with lively joy. He should regard the transaction as symbolically

¹ 2 Samuel xxiii. 5.

espousing them to Jesus Christ, and as introducing them into a connection where all is promise and blessing. This far excels the most eminent relationship on earth, and no inheritance here is worthy to be compared to it. He should aim in all his future course to walk in all covenant obedience, and, like Abraham with his son and grandson, to sojourn by faith with his children "as heirs with him of the same promise."

Parents, moreover, should improve the ordinance of baptism, *by cherishing intense and constant desires after the spiritual benefit of their children*, and by labouring continually for this purpose.

The administration of baptism suggests to parents the importance and necessity of seeking earnestly the spiritual welfare of their children. It supplies powerful arguments and the strongest encouragements for prayer in their behalf; and it furnishes constraining motives to employ diligently all scriptural means for their conversion and instruction in righteousness. Brought by baptism into a visible relation to Christ and his Church, children, though morally defiled, should be regarded by their parents as relatively holy. At the Saviour's command they have been brought to Him, and given up to Him. Parents have by this act surrendered them to the God of all grace. They are dedicated to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that they may be wholly the Lord's, and may afterwards walk worthy of this high calling. Parents should earnestly labour that their children may actually partake of the spiritual benefits which baptism represents and seals. For themselves, they should seek special grace that they may be enabled to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Children are presented to the Church, and then entrusted to parents as dedicated ones, that they may be taught all things whatsoever the Lord has commanded. At the time of this dedication, parents, feeling their solemn responsibility, should plead that they may have an early and saving acquaintance with the Divine promises—that they may soon come to know the things that are freely given them of God. And ever afterwards, while the child lives, a godly parent may refer to his baptism as a powerful plea in asking for him the enjoyment of all saving blessings. While God's covenant remains, and its seal is uncanceled, he may not question the Divine willingness to save to the uttermost all that come unto Him, or that are brought to Him according to his own institution. On this ground, he may supplicate for himself gracious help to enable him to discharge his solemn duties. Having received the sign and seal of the covenant for his off-

spring, he is encouraged to seek aid from above to make them acquainted with their privileges and obligation. He has the warrant to plead for the Holy Spirit to bless his efforts, and to command success. As he brings his children to the Saviour in prayer, he may say : " Receive my offspring, as thou didst command me to bring them to thee. O, take them into thine arms and bless them. They were thine, and thou gavest them me. Graciously hast thou privileged them with the means of salvation. Oh ! that they may live in thy sight. Let them be received under thy special protection and care. Make them subjects of thy renewing and sanctifying grace. Dispose and enable them to do whatsoever thou hast commanded. O sanctify them wholly, and preserve them unto thine everlasting kingdom." Matthew Henry judiciously remarks : " The sealing of the covenant in general, as a token of God's goodwill to our seed, is a sufficient handle for *faith* to take hold on in *praying* for our children. I see not how those parents can with equal confidence pray for their children, who deny them to be in covenant, and so set them upon even ground with the children of infidels."¹

The baptism of their children may be ever afterwards used by Christian parents as one of their strongest pleas on their behalf at the mercy-seat. When they bring them to holy ordinances, they may entreat that God would remember the covenant of their youth, and bestow on them his special grace. When they are exposed to temptation, they may plead that they may be preserved and delivered from the snare of the fowler, as they were early given up to the Lord, and as by their baptism, He claimed them as his. In the sickness and death of children, parents may make mention of the same dedication, and may take to themselves the comfort that the Lord will not forsake the work of his hands, or cast off those that were placed under his care, and committed to his protection and blessing. On the same ground, too, parents are encouraged to employ, besides prayer, all other appointed means for the conversion and spiritual training of their children. Salvation comes to a house when the means of salvation are faithfully dispensed to it ; and this lays the members of a family under obligation to accept of the salvation itself when they are capable of so doing. Baptism, as a seal confirming the offer and promise of salvation, is certainly to be regarded as a special means of blessing. The oracles of God, the adoption, and other spiritual privileges,

¹ Henry's *Treatise on Baptism*, Complete Works, p. 242.

belonged to the children of Israelitish parents in virtue of their circumcision. In like manner, the children of Christian parents, in consequence of their baptism, have a proper right to all the means of grace, and to all Gospel privileges. Parents, as they rest under the most weighty obligations, should seek earnestly that their children may actually enjoy these. They are to bring them up in "the nurture and admonition of the Lord." They are bound to labour for their early conversion. Theirs it is to guard them against the numerous evils that surround them, train them for usefulness in God's service, and by precept and example aim to prepare them for the enjoyment of a blessed immortality. The parental obligation resulting from baptism should be felt and faithfully discharged at every future stage of the existence of the parent and child, as long as the relation lasts. Thus the hearts of fathers will be turned to their children, and of children to their parents; the curse threatened will be removed, and choicest blessings will descend upon the land.¹ Thus the truth and an inheritance of gracious privileges will be transmitted from one generation to another; and the piety of families will radiate as from a centre of light, to purify and revive the Church, and to convert the world. The baptismal vow duly recognized in its obligation upon parents and children, and properly paid, by the diligent performance of solemn reciprocal duties, is calculated to confer innumerable benefits upon the human race. When the Gospel shall have achieved its last triumphs, and the Redeemer's kingdom shall embrace the world's wide population, the prayers of godly parents will be abundantly answered—God's work shall appear before his servant's face, and his glory will be brightly manifested to their children.²

Obligation of Christian Mothers.

Before closing this view of the improvement of baptism by parents, we may briefly advert to the special obligation which the ordinance imposes upon CHRISTIAN MOTHERS. While it is fully admitted that parental duties concern both parents, there can be no doubt that they are incumbent in a peculiar sense upon the mother. The strength of maternal affection has been always and almost among all people proverbial. In the Sacred Scriptures it is referred to as the expressive emblem of

¹ Malachi iv. 6.

² Psalm xc. 16.

Divine kindness and compassion: "As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you."¹ By the exercise of tenderness, when blended with wisdom and fidelity, a mother obtains an influence over the minds of her children which no other human being can. Children in early years are almost exclusively in the hands of the mother, hearing her instructions, observing her example, and receiving from her daily innumerable proofs of affection, at a period the most important of human life—the period of the rapid development of the mental faculties and of the formation of character.

When the Emperor Napoleon is said to have asked Madame Campan what France chiefly required to cure her manifold evils, and to render her great and illustrious, she replied in one word—MOTHERS. So it may be truly declared, that the instrumentality of godly mothers is powerful to prevent or rectify evils in the Church, and to diffuse a healthful and permanent influence throughout communities civil and ecclesiastical.

In the administration of baptism, the responsibility of the female parent should be distinctly and fully recognized. Instead of being regarded as represented by her husband, and so allowed to be absent, or not to enter expressly into any engagement upon the occasion, it were evidently more suitable that she should publicly, with all the solemnity of a sacramental vow, come under a direct and formal obligation, in regard to the soul of the child, and for its religious training. Under the Christian economy, the privileges of children are increased by the admission of females to baptism; female parents should therefore consider it not only as a special duty, but as a high privilege, to enter into solemn vows in behalf of their children. To them are entrusted the first care and training of their children. By the death of the father, the whole of the future religious education and guidance of the children may devolve upon them; and by their fidelity in the charge confided to them, they may be the means of incalculable benefit to the Church, and will themselves reap a glorious reward. On all these grounds, it must be apparent that mothers are bound to enter formally into the baptismal covenant; and that they, in a peculiar manner, are required to evince their sense of the obligation by seeking, by all appointed means, the spiritual benefit of their children."²

¹ Isaiah lxvi. 13.

² In opposition to the views which are advocated in the text, the practice in Presbyterian Churches, as well as others, and even where the ordinance

To fulfil their vow in baptism, mothers should learn to cherish habitually *a sense of their responsibility to God in behalf of their children.* God implanted maternal affection with the design of employing it as a powerful instrument of effecting his beneficent purposes towards the human family. A mother cannot forget the son of her womb. The depths of her affection, the anxieties of her heart for the welfare of her child, can never be fully declared. With what tenderness will she watch over a sick child, exhaust her strength, and peril her life, to procure his restoration to health ! When wayward or wandering, she will yearn over his return to the paths of virtue ; and if reclaimed, with what ecstatic joy will she welcome his recovery as the fruit of earnest prayers and solemn vows ! The tie which binds a Christian mother to her offspring is, in many respects, absolutely indissoluble. Whether they walk in wisdom's ways, or turn aside to the paths of folly, her heart is with her children ; and they cause her indescribable happiness or misery, according as they act properly, or deviate from the way of righteousness. Even in death, a mother's heart is in the loved ones ; and she weeps with bitter sorrow over the grave of those that are lost, as she rejoices with holy joy over those who have died in the Lord.

Children, too, in most cases, become early sensible of the power of maternal affection, and learn to reciprocate it. In childhood this is universally observable. The infant clings to its mother, looks to her for support and direction, and lodges all its complaints and cares in her bosom. The youth of right principles will always gratefully confess his obligation to a mother's training and example ; and even when the paths of virtue have been forsaken, the instances are not rare in which the wanderer has acknowledged that, through a mother's prayers, he was held back from crime and reclaimed to the path of rectitude.

of baptism is publicly dispensed, is for the mother either to take no part in presenting the child in baptism, or to give no public assent to the baptismal engagement made by the parent. In cases not a few, the previous instructions given by the minister are withheld from the mother, and no pains are taken to ascertain whether she has scriptural views of the ordinance, or to press upon her a sense of the solemn duties which she owes to her child. The consequence is, that many female parents, even where an evangelical profession is made, entertain very low and unworthy views in relation to the nature and design of baptism, and do not afterwards betake themselves to a diligent discharge of parental duties. Mothers, instead of being honoured by such neglect, are in reality injured, and devoted female influence, which is of great power, is lost to families and to the Church.

A mother's affection has thus vast power either to ruin her children or to promote their happiness. It has a plastic force to mould their character and to determine their future destinies. More or less, every human being is influenced for good or evil by the mother that bore and nursed him. The fortunes of the rising generation may therefore be said to be eminently in the hands of mothers, and their influence for good or evil must be felt in the Church and in the world for ages to come. If female parents, like Hannah, devote their children to God "all the days of their life," or, like Lois and Eunice, by "faith unfeigned" train them to practise from childhood the lessons of Holy Scripture, they will confer an incalculable blessing not only on their own families, but also on the whole Church.

In the view of interests so solemn, and consequences so momentous, mothers should cherish a deep and abiding sense of their responsibility. In the overflowing of maternal affection, they should consider the worth of the soul of the little immortal that they fondle in their bosom, and their paramount obligation to nurse it for God. They should earnestly inquire, Is it spiritually well with the child? They should seriously think that either it must be trained for God's service here, and for eternal felicity, or that it will live without God in the world, and be miserable for ever. Mothers should habitually realize their dread accountability. When they press their children in their arms, or bend over their cradle, they should bring them to His arms who alone can effectually bless them; and they should "travail as in birth" that Christ may be formed in their hearts. How fearful the case of those "careless ones," who have no serious thoughts on such a subject! We recoil with horror at the intelligence of Pagan mothers imbruing their hands in the blood of their children, and offering them in sacrifice to some disgusting idol. But surely the crime of mothers in Christian lands is worse, when they neglect the souls of their children, or pervert them by evil instruction and example, and their final doom will be more tremendous.

While unconverted, mothers cannot feel aright parental responsibility. They may cherish maternal affection, caress with fondness their infant offspring, and take pleasure in ministering to their bodily wants and to the development of their minds. But the worth of the soul and its vast and undying interests will be overlooked, and no proper sense will be entertained of the importance of training it for God, or of their own solemn accountability in the matter. It is fearful, indeed,

to contemplate the condition of an unconverted mother bringing into the world an immortal being, and, without any proper sense of its eternal destiny, leading it in the path to ruin. Not feeling its naturally lost condition, insensible of her own want and misery, and living prayerless, her conduct can only be injurious to her offspring. Under the inspection of an unawakened, unconverted mother, the child will grow up ignorant of God, unacquainted with its sin and misery, and in danger of a lost eternity. Mothers should consider how dreadful it will be for them to appear at the judgment-seat, and give account for the children that they nursed for themselves or for the world, but whose souls they neglected, and whom they misled to their ruin by their instructions and example. This feeling of responsibility mothers should always cherish—in all their intercourse with their families—in their whole conduct and example. If it is entertained so as to lead to befitting effort, it will compensate for the want of eminent abilities in the mother, and will give weight to maternal instructions which nothing else can. It will dispose mothers habitually to deny themselves for the benefit of their children—will constrain them to fervent prayer on their behalf, and induce them to use all means, as if all depended on them, for bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. A lady of rank once told the author, that after her marriage, and before her first child was born, when the rest of her household were retired to bed, she was frequently accustomed to spend hours, till an advanced period of the night, in studying the Scriptures, under a deep sense of her responsibility, and with an earnest concern that she might be fitted to train the children that God might give her in the ways of religion.¹

To cherish and act upon this sense of responsibility is more difficult than is generally imagined. There are *dangers* to which mothers are peculiarly exposed, and by which many are overcome, that tend to turn them aside from the path of duty, and to prevent their attention to the spiritual training of their offspring. Their bodily weakness and trials are made an

¹ This was Lady Bateson, of Belovir Park, near Belfast. Of some of her children, who died young, there was good evidence of their having early received religious impressions. Her eldest son—Robert Bateson, Esq., M.P., who was a rising statesman—when dying at Jerusalem of fever, which he caught in his travels, showed himself to be intimately acquainted with the Holy Scriptures, and gave strong and clear expression to his Christian hope in death. He ascribed, too, his religious impressions to maternal instruction.

excuse for neglecting at times the instruction of their children, and for intermitting the practice of other important parental duties. Yet these should serve as a monitor to remind them of the uncertainty of life, and of the value of present opportunities, and should impel them to greater diligence and earnestness in bringing their children to Him who hath chosen "weak things to confound the mighty," and whose glory it is to "perfect strength in weakness." Mothers are, moreover, in danger of lavishing all their *care upon the bodies* of their children—of making them mere fondlings of affection, and of deferring unduly their religious training. There are necessary cares about children in infancy; there are provisions required for their health and safety, which must engage much of a mother's solicitude and attention. But surely this authorizes no exemption from the higher duties of caring for the welfare of their immortal souls. Infantile weakness should remind mothers of the helpless moral condition of their children, and of the urgent need of providing for their spiritual safety, in the prospect either of their growing up in an evil world, or of their removal by death. It is sadly misplaced affection, not unlike children delighting in dolls and toys, or the instincts of some of the lower animals, to caress a child, and take pleasure in its outward form, while its higher nature and eternal interests are overlooked. The impulses of affection, to be productive of real benefit to its object, must be controlled and directed by a sense of duty; and it should ever be borne in mind, that "*wherever affection interferes with principle, a primary law is outraged, and misery must be the result.*"¹ Such tender mercy the Scriptures represent as cruel. To defer unduly the spiritual culture of children is certainly injurious. Children may be trained to proper habits even in infancy. The leading traits of character, which afterwards remain, are early developed; and under the blessing of the Spirit, little ones may be brought to understand the great truths of the Gospel, in the first years of their existence, and may derive from them saving benefit. It is therefore highly criminal, under any pretence, to withhold from them what is essential to their welfare, and to neglect that on which their eternal salvation in a great measure depends.

Wherever mothers expend their chief pains in training a child's body, or in seeking to prepare it only for this present life, and neglect or defer the concern for the soul, they are to be regarded as selfish and perverted in their affections. They

¹ *Treatise on the Sacrament of Baptism*, by Rev. W. K. Tweedie, p. 116.

nurse their children for themselves or the world, and not for God, and the consequences cannot fail to be disastrous. The immortal part is sacrificed to the mortal—the vast interests of eternity are made to give place to the fleeting concerns of time; and while mothers contract a great load of guilt, children advance in life, ignorant of God and unconcerned about their salvation; and parents and children, remaining unawakened, are ripened for the fearful retribution of a common inheritance in misery.

The principal danger and the fruitful source of almost all the others to which mothers are exposed, is an *erroneous or imperfect view of the natural condition* of children. They do not properly consider the declarations of Scripture concerning the fallen state of human nature, nor regard their children, when they are born into the world, and given into their hands to be trained, as ruined and helpless—as exposed to God's fearful curse, and every moment liable to everlasting destruction. They look upon them and speak of them as being innocent. Unconverted and carnal mothers regard with the utmost repugnance the Scripture doctrine of the fall, and cannot think that their children are dead in trespasses and sins.¹ Even where the doctrine of original sin is admitted, it is to be feared that many mothers have low views of the inherent malady, and are not therefore in earnest in seeking the remedy. The innocence and gentleness of childhood in man's sight are mistaken for innocence before God; and kindness, benevolence, and filial obedience are regarded as evidences that the nature is not wholly depraved, and that there is no urgent need of that renewal of heart and life which the Scriptures declare to be indispensable to an entrance into the kingdom of God. Hence mothers entertain no overpowering sense of their children's guilt and depravity; little or no attempt is made to eradicate the evil of the nature; and there is no travailing in birth for their regeneration. The sad result is, that the disease of the nature gathers strength, and in the hands of a mother blind to her child's spiritual condition, it grows up in habits of confirmed ignorance and ungodliness. To avoid this fearful danger, fraught with ruin to multitudes, Christian mothers should look upon the loveliest child as by nature under the curse, and

¹ Hence it is common to speak of children when dying or dead, as being chargeable with no sin, and as certainly gone to happiness, without any reference to their fallen state, or to Christ's finished work, as the only ground of salvation.

exposed to eternal misery. They should first of all labour for their early conversion to God, and should rest satisfied with nothing in or about their children, till they have some evidence that they are adopted into the family of God. Like the father of the faithful, when pleading about a child apparently in danger of rejection, they should fervently pray to God, "O that my child might live before thee." This should be regarded as the end of all their aims and desires about their offspring—to bring them to Christ for the blessing, and to train them to love and serve Him from their earliest years, as they expect their felicity in the full enjoyment of Him for ever.

Besides the dangers to which we have adverted, against which mothers should constantly watch and pray, there are *trials* peculiar to them, which only a mother can properly estimate. The feeling of parental responsibility to which we have alluded sometimes becomes oppressive and overwhelming. The sickness and death of infant children, before they can possibly give evidence of faith in Christ—the difficulty of managing aright a number of children in a family, each having a different disposition—the dread of dangers to which they are exposed as they grow up—and the painful anxiety of Christian mothers when they see their children advancing in life, without giving evidence that they have laid to heart the claims of religion,—these are trials from which the best of Christian mothers have not been exempted. The severest trial, however, lies in a parent being called to witness the waywardness, folly, and sometimes hopeless end of children that were tenderly nursed, and whose spiritual welfare was an object of unceasing care and solicitude. While it may be admitted that the falls and evil courses of children may often be traced to defects in the training of parents, or to their sins of temper or spirit or conduct, there can be no doubt that God frequently acts as a Sovereign in allotting to godly parents such a trial. Of children of the same family, one is taken and another is left; and to rebuke human presumption, and show that the best efforts are nothing without special grace, while the young of irreligious parents sometimes become monuments of mercy, the children of devoted parents forsake good instructions, and take the downhill path to ruin. In this afflictive case, who can declare or conceive the distress of a Christian mother? The child that is a part of herself, that she fondled in her bosom, that she taught from infancy the way of godliness, for whom she fervently prayed, and whom she often solemnly

dedicated to God—to see this child lost to all good, and rapidly ripening for ruin—this is affliction to a godly mother the most severe and crushing that can befall her in life. Under a trial of this kind, such poignant grief will be hers as rent the heart of the king of Israel, when he went up to his chamber weeping, and when, as he poured out his bitter sorrows over a lost son, he exclaimed, “O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!”¹

In such trials, even in the heaviest, there is support and relief to a Christian mother in considering that salvation is of sovereign grace, and that the covenant of grace is ordered in all things and sure. Like the dying monarch of Israel, who had his full share of domestic trials, she should say, “Although my house be not so with God, yet He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, . . . for this is all my salvation, and all my desire.”² She may derive comfort, moreover, from the thought that her children were dedicated to God, and that they may afterwards obtain the blessing, though the stream of mercy may long run underground, and though a parent may not live to realize her fondest hopes, in witnessing their calling and conversion. She should appropriate the comfort once administered by a venerable minister to Monica, the mother of Augustine, when he said, “Woman, it is impossible that the child of so many tears and prayers should be lost.” The instances of the mothers of John Newton and Legh Richmond, who died when their sons were in infancy, show that maternal prayers for the salvation of children are sometimes graciously answered when those who offered them have ceased to pray and weep. Both of these distinguished servants of God, in early life, forgot God, and wandered in the ways of sin and folly, and yet both confessed that even in their wanderings they remembered their mothers’ prayers; and these were not only the means of restraining them from certain evil courses, but were ultimately answered, in their conversion to God and eminent usefulness. Christian mothers should continue to hope to the end. They have offered prayers and made vows, and tendered counsels and warnings, which may hedge up the way of backsliders and wanderers. Even when it comes to the worst, and there is no further ground of hope, they will be enabled to bow in resignation to the Divine Sovereign disposal, gracious supports will be vouchsafed, and the consolations of the Spirit will not be want-

¹ 2 Samuel xviii. 33.

² 2 Samuel xxiii. 5.

ing in the hour of severest trial.¹ He that commanded again to life the centurion's daughter when there appeared to be no hope—He who arrested the bier, and gave back an only son to a widowed mother—is yet the same, full of compassion and mighty in power. He is still ready to hear and answer prayer. He goes after the lost sheep, and searches till He finds it. He can recover the wandering, and bid the spiritually dead live. And should it not comport with his sovereign purpose to fulfil all the earnest desires of devoted parents, He knows how to comfort and support the distressed. He is a Brother “born for adversity.” In the darkest dispensations, He enables his people to bow in resignation to his righteous disposal, and to acknowledge that all his ways are in rectitude and faithfulness.

A few of the *peculiar duties* of Christian mothers may be briefly noticed:—

1. *The spiritual welfare of their children should be always made a matter of primary concern.* This should be their great object in all that they do for their children—in their prayers, instructions, and whole conduct towards them. How their children may be saved from the wrath to come, and prepared for God's service, should be their first and principal study. To promote this, they should subordinate every other business to their spiritual training, and employ every Christian expedient for this end. The expressions of maternal affection should draw children “with cords of love and bands of a man” to Jesus the Great Shepherd, who “gathers the lambs with his arm,” and lays them in his bosom. If others lavish their whole care upon the bodies of their children, or in preparing them for the business of the world, Christian mothers should show that the soul's salvation of their children is valued by them above every other possession or enjoyment. Like Hannah, the pious mother of Samuel, for this they should pray, before their children are born; and when afterwards they embrace them, and show all a mother's care and tenderness about them, they should habitually act on the resolution of the same godly

¹ The case of Andrew Fuller and his son is an illustration of Divine support given to a parent, when suffering severely from the folly and wickedness of a child whom he had carefully instructed, and for whom he had fervently prayed. Amid repeated instances of his son's extravagance and misconduct, Fuller was enabled to continue in prayer, and to look up expecting an answer; and though the youth came to a premature end, in a distant land, as the fruit of foolish and sinful courses, he was not taken away till there was some evidence of his father's prayers being answered, in his obtaining mercy.

woman : "They shall be lent to the Lord ; as long as they live they shall be the Lord's." In labouring for the spiritual welfare of her children, a female parent is herself greatly honoured. She becomes a "mother in Israel," and "while many daughters do virtuously," she excels them all. Earnestly concerned to fulfil her engagement on behalf of her children, her secret thoughts and desires will be all for their spiritual good ; her intercourse with them will evince this to be her chief concern respecting them, by which she will be influenced, in directing them in relation to their duties, habits, pursuits, and companions in life.

2. A Christian mother should consider herself *charged with a principal part of the spiritual instructions of her children.* Even where the other parent is disposed and qualified to teach his children, the instructions of a godly mother are often of singular benefit to a family. Children are near her at an age when they are hardly capable of direct instruction from their father ; and yet even then, they may be taught much that is good and profitable, and may receive impressions which will remain with them throughout all their future life. They are chiefly in a mother's plastic hands, in the forming time of their minds and habits ; and the seeds that are then sown may afterwards germinate and yield a rich harvest. Besides, the gentle, familiar solemn manner in which affectionate Christian mothers tender instructions is better adapted to infantile minds than any other ; and the frequency with which important truths and principles of conduct are inculcated by mothers upon their little ones gathered around them, is much better fitted to enlighten them and mould their habits, than the lessons of fathers, which are only given after considerable intervals, however able or appropriate. If those who are "weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts," are "taught knowledge," and made to understand doctrine, "precept must be upon precept, and line upon line ;"¹ and this is the kind of teaching that mothers are peculiarly qualified to impart. It is related that Dr Dwight's mother, who was daughter of the excellent Jonathan Edwards, and had a large family, was accustomed to conduct the early education of the elder children, while a younger child was rocking the cradle of the infant, or while she was busy in some domestic employment.²

¹ Isaiah xxviii. 9, 10.

² "It was a maxim with her, the soundness of which her own observation through life fully confirmed, that children generally lose several years, in

In the days of our reforming forefathers, the catechizing of children and servants was frequently the special work of ladies of rank, or of the wives of eminent ministers. Were Christian mothers still to imitate such laudable examples, we have no doubt that family instructions would be more efficient, and Christian households would afford fuller evidence of walking with delight under the power and love of the truth.

3. They should *exemplify the spirit of true religion before their children*. A mother's example is a constant monitor to her children, and must have a powerful influence, either to draw them to the paths of virtue, or to turn them away from religion. This is a lesson presented to them daily, and whatever else they may learn or forget, this they may certainly be expected to copy. In a mother's temper and habits, children should see exemplified a life of religion, and should learn whatsoever is pure, and lovely, and of good report. When Sarah is held forth to Christian women for imitation, she is commended for having "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit," which is said to be in the sight of God "of great price."¹ Christian mothers should thus study to display before their children the lovely and attractive graces of our holy religion. They should be examples of faith and patience and meekness, while they should be characterized by holy decision, activity, and perseverance in well-doing. All their instructions should be recommended and enforced by a holy, consistent example. Here is eminently a mother's sphere of salutary influence. She should always be able, by the language of action, to say to her children, "*Be ye followers of me, even as*

consequence of being considered *too young* to be taught. She pursued a different course with her son. She began to instruct him almost as soon as he was able to speak; and such was his eagerness, as well as his capacity for improvement, that, before he was four years old, he was able to read the Bible with ease and correctness." "With the benefit of his father's example constantly before him, enforced and commanded by the precepts of his mother, he was sedulously instructed in the doctrines of religion, as well as the whole circle of moral duties. She taught him from the very dawn of reason to fear God; to be conscientiously just and kind; affectionate and charitable and forgiving; to preserve on all occasions, and under all circumstances, the most sacred regard to truth; to relieve the distresses and supply the wants of the poor and unfortunate. She aimed, at a very early period, to enlighten his conscience, to make him afraid of sin, and taught him to hope for pardon only through the righteousness of Christ. The impressions thus made were never effaced."—*Life of Dr Dwight*.

¹ 1 Peter iii. 4.

I also am of Christ.”¹ A mother’s conduct, as well as instructions, should ever

“Point to brighter worlds, and lead the way.”

The cases on record are not few in which persons who have become distinguished have confessed that they were first impressed with the excellency of goodness from what they observed in their mothers, and that they were chiefly indebted for their future eminence to their example. The mothers of Isaac, Moses, Samuel, David, and Lemuel in the Old Testament; and of our Lord, of John the Baptist, of several of the apostles, and of Timothy in the New; are illustrious instances of maternal piety, connected with the eminent usefulness of children. Not a few of the martyrs of Christ were the children of believing mothers; and the same connection between parental piety and distinguished usefulness in devoted ministers, missionaries, and other public servants of Christ, is easily observable.²

4. Mothers should regard themselves not only called *to pray for their children*, but frequently *to pray with them*. At the mercy-seat they will have power with God and with man, and prevail. Here woman’s weakness becomes armed with the power of Omnipotence. God is wont greatly to honour those who cherish the spirit and cultivate the habits of Hannah, and of Lois and Eunice. Our Lord when on earth showed forth his power and Godhead, by answering frequently the prayers of mothers who applied to Him for the relief of their children. He is yet ready to hear and willing to answer the petitions of mothers pleading for spiritual blessings for their offspring. Mothers should pray *with* their children, as well as pray *for* them. Even little ones are impressed by a parent kneeling with them at the throne of grace, and uttering a few simple petitions for them, more than by instructions, however suitable; and they will thus be brought to a sense of what they have said or done amiss, more than by corporeal correction. To a mother herself there is no position more solemn than that of

¹ 1 Corinthians xi. 1.

² The mothers of many of Scotland’s reformers and martyrs of the Covenant were devoted Christian women. See *Ladies of the Covenant, passim*. The mothers of Dr Payson, and the late Drs M’Crie and Chalmers were not only truly pious, but also women of superior minds. In the admirable work of the late Rev. Christopher Anderson, on the *Domestic Constitution*, a large number of instances are given of distinguished scholars, statesmen, and divines, who owed much of their future eminence to parental wisdom and piety, and to careful parental training. See Anderson’s *Domestic Constitution*, pp. 110-163.

leading her child to the mercy-seat and pouring out her heart in its behalf. Her own spirit cannot fail to be benefited, and she will carry away from the exercise a deeper and more permanent conviction of the worth of the soul, and will be impelled to seek more diligently and earnestly its salvation. Efforts begun and carried on in prayer are, to a large extent, blessed. Children who have from infancy been convinced that their mothers were prayerful, and who have, in company with them, frequently engaged in prayer, may be expected to be impressed with the idea, that "everything is sanctified by the Word of God and by prayer," and that they cannot hope to enjoy any safety or blessing but in prayer.

However arduous may be the work, and solemn the responsibility of a Christian mother—however great her dangers and trials—she has manifold ENCOURAGEMENT both from the declarations of the Divine Word, and from God's gracious providential dealings with the families of his people. The prayer of faith, we are assured, will be heard, and efforts made in faith are never altogether in vain. It is accordant with God's plan of mercy that He advances his glory by means of the weakest instrumentality; and this is strikingly illustrated by a blessing upon the labours of female parents. Frequently has it been observed, that where the children of a family are remarkable for piety or eminent usefulness, this was connected with the fervent piety of the mother. Of the fruits of maternal fidelity, we have a striking instance in the justly celebrated Richard Cecil. Though religiously educated, when a young man he became infidel, and laboured to instil the same principles into others. His excellent mother, however, continued to pray for him; and at length the impression of her earnest piety was the means of arresting him in his career of folly, and of effectually reclaiming him. One night, as he lay contemplating the case of his mother, he said within himself—

"I see two unquestionable facts: first, My mother is greatly afflicted in circumstances, body, and mind, and yet I see that she cheerfully bears up under all, by the support she derives from constantly repairing to her closet and her Bible; secondly, that she has a secret spring of comfort of which I know nothing, while I, who give an unbounded loose to my appetites, and seek pleasure by every means, seldom or ever find it. If, however, there is such a secret in religion, why may I not find it as well as my mother?" He instantly rose and began to pray, but was soon damped, by recollecting that much of his mother's comfort seemed to arise from her faith in Christ. Now "this Christ I have ridiculed: He stands much in my way, and can form no part of my prayers." In utter confusion he lay down again; but, in process of time, conviction of sin continuing, his difficulties were gradually

removed, his objections answered. He now listened to those admonitions of his mother which he had before affected to receive with pride and scorn; yet they had fixed themselves in his heart like a barbed arrow; and though the effects were concealed from her observation, yet tears would fall from his eyes, as he passed along the street, from the impression she had made on his mind. Now he would discourse with her, and hear her without outrage, which revived her hopes, especially as he then attended the public worship of God. Thus he made some progress, but felt no small difficulty in separating from his favourite connections. Light, however, broke into his mind, till at last he discovered that Christ Jesus, so far from "standing in the way," as he once thought, was indeed "*the way, the truth, and the life*, to all who come unto God by Him."

After such a change so produced, it is not wonderful that Mr Cecil should speak as he does of the power of parental influence. "Where parental influence does not convert," he would say, "it hammers; it hangs on the wheels of evil." Again, he says—

"I find in myself another evidence of the greatness of parental influence. I detect myself, to this day, in laying down maxims in my family, which I took up at three or four years of age, before I could possibly know the reason of them." "Besides, parental influence must be great, because God has said it shall be so. The parent is not to stand reasoning and calculating. God has said that his character *shall* have influence; and so this *appointment* of Providence becomes often the punishment of a wicked man. Such a man is a complete *selfist*. I am weary of hearing such men talk about their 'family'—and their 'family'—they 'must provide for their family.' Their family has no place in their real regard; they push for themselves. But God says, No! you think your children shall be so and so; but they shall be rods for your own backs. They shall be your curse. They shall rise up against you. The most common of all human complaints is, parents groaning under the vices of their children! This is all the effect of parental influence."¹

While the command to "train" children aright, and the promise of beneficial results (Prov. xxii. 6) have been thought by some to guarantee in all cases a blessing to follow faithful parental training, so that no child so reared finally perishes, we may at least safely infer from it, that in a great majority of cases such exertions will be crowned with success. Mothers should think of the unspeakable honour of nursing children for God, and of their feeble efforts being made available for the conversion of their children, and to prepare them for usefulness in the Church, and for advancing the Redeemer's glory in the world. True, it is not in their power to regenerate one soul; but the Spirit, graciously promised to them who ask Him, can quicken, and seal to the day of redemption. Amidst difficulties and trials, mothers should continue to pray and labour. The

¹ See Anderson's *Domestic Constitution*, pp. 156-158.

conversion of their children to God will surely be an abundant reward for all their anxiety and self-denying exertions; while to be instrumental in training labourers for the Redeemer's vineyard on earth; and for the work of the upper sanctuary, is an honour transcending all that the world can bestow upon its favourites. Godly mothers may look forward with humble but assured hope to that "recompense of reward" which the King will at length confer, when they and their believing offspring will exult together in the bliss of heaven—when in holy transport they will be enabled to exclaim, "Behold we, and the children whom God hath given us;" and those whom they tenderly nursed, and whom they reared for Christ's service, shall share with them in the "fulness of joy, and rivers of pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore."

Let Christian mothers, in dedicating their children to God in baptism, and afterwards improving it, propose to themselves these high objects, and seek to realize this honour and blessedness. Let them consider that, in caring for the spiritual welfare of their children, they are elevating and ennobling their own character, and performing to the Church and to the world one of the most important services in which a human being can be employed. If they are unconcerned on this vital subject, if they live prayerless and without faith, or if their children's spiritual improvement is postponed, from considerations of their own ease and worldly interests, they will not only themselves be chargeable with aggravated criminality, but will be the means of dragging down others with them to hopeless destruction. As they would escape a doom so fearful, let them lay to heart their special interest in the baptismal engagement. Let them aim continually after their children's renewal in the spirit of holiness, and by all the power of a mother's affection, all the earnestness of a mother's prayers, and all the constraining force of a mother's attractive example, let them endeavour that those whom God has given them may be a blessing in the earth, the instruments of making known to future generations the Redeemer's renowned fame.

CHAPTER XII.

SALVATION AND DEATH OF INFANTS.

BEFORE concluding this treatise, it seems proper to state briefly the doctrine of Scripture in relation to the salvation of children dying in infancy. A large number of the human family die in childhood, probably not less than *one-fourth of all that are born into the world*; and it is calculated that "one-half of all that are born die before they have reached the full standing of members in the Christian Church."¹ What is the state in death? what the final condition of this vast number? are inquiries not only prompted by an earnest curiosity, but to which also a regard to the Divine glory, and a consideration of the immortal spirit demand an answer. The anxieties of Christian parents on this subject, too, require to be at least alleviated, if they cannot be fully satisfied; and in cases where tender loved ones are removed by death from the embraces of fond parents, and where death has made frequent inroads among the infantile members of a family, the inquiry assumes a peculiarly solemn and absorbing interest.

The subject of infant salvation has been injuriously treated, not only by Socinians and Pelagians, who reject other fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, but likewise by others whose sentiments are generally considered evangelical. Some of the most eminent English divines, both ancient and modern, who strongly repudiate the Popish dogma of baptismal regeneration, teach that infant children are in a state of salvation, as having "*prevenient grace*," or a "*holy infantile disposition*;" others, that all infants are not only adopted and justified, but also regenerated and sanctified. But this justification, regeneration, and adoption, are of a different kind from that which is conferred on believing adults. It is suited to baptized infants, so that if they die in infancy, they shall thereby be saved; but should they live to mature age, they may, notwithstanding,

¹ See *The Office and Work of the Holy Spirit*, by Rev. James Buchanan, p. 213.

through the corruption of actual sin, fall away and perish.¹ Several distinguished Congregational divines, by means of the doctrine of *general atonement* which they advocate, hold that all infants dying in infancy, whether their parents make a profession of religion or not, are certainly saved.² Such writers teach that infants do not need the penalty of the violated law removed, for they were not properly under it; and maintain that the Saviour is only a "Head of influence to them, and not a sacrifice for their personal guilt."

It need not be declared how contrary all this is to the plain and reiterated statements of the Word, and how incompatible it is with the scheme of salvation by grace. The Scriptures represent the whole human race fallen and ruined in Adam as its federal head, and that "judgment has come upon all"—infants as well as others—"to condemnation." Those who teach that infants are justified and adopted in infancy admit, that if they live beyond the period of infancy, they may forfeit the title which they had obtained through actual sin, and may at last perish. This is plainly to inculcate the Popish heresy that grace is defectible, that those who were once in a state of grace, and had fellowship with Christ, may, notwithstanding, come short of eternal salvation. While such a view dishonours Christ, by teaching that his work is imperfect, it cannot furnish any solid comfort to Christian parents with respect to their infant offspring. The saints in heaven are represented as all singing the same song—"THOU HAST REDEEMED US TO GOD BY THY BLOOD." Their being "redeemed" implies that they were formerly guilty and depraved; and if infants were not

¹ This is the sentiment of Bishop Davenant, one of the British delegates to the Synod of Dort.

² The Rev. Thomas Binney, in his work entitled *The Great Gorham Case*, thus speaks of those who hold that infants are under the curse, and liable to God's wrath in consequence of Adam's sin—"They alike assume the liability of all infants, *as such*, TO GOD'S EVERLASTING WRATH AND DAMNATION, and that every babe is born into the world fitted for HELL. . . . But I will say for myself, that with my views of the Divine character, the meaning of the Bible, the redemption of Christ, and the probation of mercy, if I were to adopt and profess this doctrine, I should, in my own estimation, be a traitor to humanity, a denier of the Gospel, an apostate from Jesus, and an infidel to God." Another able Congregationalist writer, speaking of infants and adults respectively, says: "It is obvious that the Saviour of these two classes may be so designated in diverse degrees. The one He may save merely bringing its powers into a just accordance. He may be the *Head of influence*, without being a sacrifice for personal guilt."—*The Christian Atonement*, &c., by the Rev. Joseph Gilbert, pp. 27, 28.

once in this condition, they could not join in the song, and they could have no part in the enjoyments and praises of the upper sanctuary. Again, infants suffer pain and death, and are frequently cut off by calamities, which are inflicted by God's hand, as his threatened punishment for sin. Thus, in the destruction of the Old World, and of the cities of the plain, thousands of infants perished; and these signal acts of vengeance are always represented in Scripture as coming upon a people as the consequence of their aggravated transgression. Infant children are involved with their parents in the common ruin, the proof this that they were not regarded as innocent, but as sinful and guilty. Under a righteous Sovereign, an innocent person cannot be condemned and suffer; and the fact that infants suffer and are cut off by judgments which are inflicted directly by God's hand, is standing and irresistible evidence that children in infancy are viewed as criminals, and that it is consistent with the highest rectitude to visit upon them the penalty of the primeval offence. The emphatic inquiry of Eliphaz is applicable to infants as well as others—"Who ever perished being innocent? and where were the righteous cut off?"¹

If it is alleged, as is sometimes done by those who plead for the universal salvation of infants, that bodily pain and death are all that will be inflicted upon them as the consequence of Adam's sin, it is only needful to reply, that if outward affliction

¹ Job iv. 7. "If the perfect sinlessness of infants had been a notion entertained among the people of God of old, in the ages next following the flood, handed down from Noah and his children, who well knew that vast multitudes of infants perished in the flood, is it likely that Eliphaz, who lived within a few generations of Shem and Noah, would have said to Job, as he does in Job iv. 7—"Who ever perished being innocent? and where were the righteous cut off?" especially since in the same discourse (chap. v. 1) he appeals to a tradition of the ancients for a confirmation of this very point; as he also does in chap. xv. 7-10, and xxii. 15, 16. In which last place he mentions that very thing—the destruction of the wicked by the flood—as an instance of that perishing of the wicked, which he supposes to be peculiar to them, for Job's conviction; in which 'the wicked were cut down out of time, their foundation being overflowed with a flood.' Where it is also observable, that he speaks of such an untimeliness of death as they suffered by the flood, as an evidence of guilt; as he also does, chap. xv. 32, 33, 'It shall be accomplished before his time; and his branch shall not be green.' But those that were destroyed by the flood in infancy, above all the rest, were 'cut down out of time,' when, instead of living above nine hundred years, according to the common period of man's life, many were cut down before they were one year old."—*The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended, &c.*, by Jonathan Edwards, A. M., pp. 157, 158. Glasgow, 1819.

and death are of a penal nature, and the fruits of the curse; then, if it is consistent with infinite holiness and justice to award in this life punishment, the Sovereign Judge of all may inflict greater, without any imputation on his moral perfections. The severe sufferings and physical death of infant children certainly furnish ground to infer, that if one part of the penalty is endured by those even who "have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression," the whole may be exacted, and that without any infringement of the character or prerogatives of Deity.

There are some who advocate infant salvation on somewhat different grounds. They admit that infants are involved in the sin of Adam as the federal head of the whole human family, and are, in consequence, exposed to condemnation and ruin. But they hold that, through the constitution of grace which is now established in Christ, the direct penal effects of Adam's first sin are so far removed, that none shall be finally condemned merely for his one offence.¹ This opinion is not new. It is substantially the sentiment of Davenant, and has been ably refuted by Witsius, in his excellent work "*On the Efficacy and Utility of Baptism, in the case of Elect Infants, whose Parents are under the Covenant.*" According to it, the original guilt of infants is forgiven, though not in baptism, yet as the fruit of Christ's death, and as infants are members of the Church. Notwithstanding, if they survive the period of infancy, they may fall from their gracious state, and finally perish. This scheme is obviously liable to the most serious objections. It is built upon the foundation of a "*general atonement,*" which is destitute of support from the Scriptures. It divides the work of Christ into parts, and represents it as imperfect and incomplete. According to such views, the Redeemer expiated original sin unconditionally, and actual sin on condition of faith. If infants, redeemed and pardoned, may afterwards sin and perish, then the end of Christ's sacrifice is not obtained, and the reconciliation effected is not permanent, but ceases

¹ This is the sentiment of the late Dr Russel of Dundee. "It appears," says he, "that the original constitution, and that which is now established through Christ, are thus far co-extensive, that the direct penal effects of the sin of Adam, separately considered, are so far removed, that none shall be finally condemned merely for his one offence." Elsewhere, he teaches that original sin is not of itself a ground of condemnation. "This rests," he adds, "on the principle that the atonement of Christ is a general remedy, admitting, according to the Divine pleasure, of a particular application."—*Russel on Infant Salvation*, pp. 59-71.

when the child has passed beyond infancy, and has become a responsible being. These sentiments are derogatory to the work of Christ, and can furnish no solid comfort to those who seek to be guided in all things by the will of Christ, and not by human fancies; or to Christian parents, who are concerned about the eternal welfare of their infant children, whether living or dead.

With reference to the salvation of infants, we must in this, as in every other case, bow implicitly to the authority of God speaking in his Word. Whatever information the Sacred Oracles communicate, whether by direct statement or by legitimate inference, we are bound to receive and cordially believe; and where the Scriptures are silent, we must be content to remain ignorant. To interpose in such a case our own theories, however plausible, or to embrace the sentiments of others, however pleasing or beautifully expressed, is presumption, intermeddling with what God has not seen fit to reveal, and seeking to be wise above what is written. Having regard to a principle which cannot be controverted, we remark—

1. *That it does not appear safe to assert dogmatically that all infants are absolutely saved.* We are aware that some eminent Calvinistic divines, such as Gill and Toplady, have maintained that children dying in infancy are universally saved, on the ground that God, who knew the end from the beginning, may have included, in his eternal covenant, this large portion of the human family, while in the Divine purpose it was settled that hardened transgressors should eat of the fruit of their own doings. All that can be said at most of this sentiment is, that it is a pleasing theory—a supposition, however, unsupported by any clear or conclusive evidence. We can only determine concerning God's purposes or operations by what He has been pleased to reveal; and we search in vain the Sacred Record for any declaration, which assures us that all infants that die in infancy were elected to eternal salvation. We should ever beware of sitting to judge what is proper for God either to purpose or do. Our only safe ground is to *believe* fully that the Judge of the whole earth will do right—to receive what is revealed, and where we cannot fathom, to stand still and adore. “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.” Whether the universal salvation of infants is taught on the ground of their innocency, or of the Divine decree embracing all infants, or of a “general atonement,” the doctrine must fail to afford satisfaction to a mind bowing to Divine authority. None of these assumed principles have a clear scriptural warrant to sustain

them, and therefore the consequence deduced from them must be inconclusive and unsatisfactory. To assert positively, as some do, that all that die in infancy are certainly saved, is only to advance a presumption without proof. It is, moreover, attended with the manifest danger of clinging to a favourite theory, and straining the Scriptures to comport with it, instead of rejecting preconceived opinions, and simply hearing as a child the voice of the Beloved speaking in his Word.

2. *That the original sin of all infants is taken away through the redemption of Christ is without scriptural authority.* It is often asserted in the Bible that Christ died to put away sin—that He died as a substitutionary sacrifice, and that his death was a perfect atonement, and an adequate propitiation to Divine justice for sin. But nowhere is it asserted or hinted that, by the atonement of Christ, one kind of sin is remitted, and that other kinds are uncanceled. The sacrifice of Christ put away, for all for whom it was offered, sin of every kind, original and actual—past, present, and future. They for whom “He was made sin,” are redeemed from all iniquity, and shall be “made the righteousness of God in Him.” If any sin is taken away, all transgressions are cast into the depths of the sea. Where original sin is remitted, the subject shall never come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life. To assert, therefore, that the original sin of all infant children is fully blotted out, either through Christ’s death or by baptism; and that, in consequence, such as die in infancy shall be saved, while others, so pardoned, may live and sin actually, and perish for ever, is unsupported by a shadow of scriptural proof, and must fail to afford satisfaction to a pious reflecting mind.

3. *That baptism does not absolutely secure the salvation of infants.* The opinion that baptized infants shall certainly be saved is not only maintained by those who hold the dogma of baptismal regeneration, but likewise by the majority of their opponents—the evangelical section of the National Church of England. The one party teach that baptism regenerates, and therefore saves those who die in infancy; the other, that “infants baptized, and dying before actual sin, are certainly saved.” The latter view is that of Mr Gorham, the opponent of the Bishop of Exeter, and of Mr Goode, who is by far the ablest advocate of evangelical doctrine in the Church of England, on the article of infant baptism.¹ Both these writers, and those

¹ See his elaborate work, entitled *The Doctrine of the Church of England as to the Effects of Baptism, in the case of Infants, &c.*, by William Goode,

who adopt their views, hold that regeneration is inseparably connected with baptism—if not at the time, before or after the reception of the rite. Infantile regeneration is regarded, however, as different from the regeneration of adults—it is only regeneration *commenced*; and though sufficient to save an individual dying in infancy, it is totally inadequate to save the same individual dying in more advanced life.¹ The scriptural views of baptism which have been already advanced in this treatise afford no countenance to such sentiments. Considered as an external rite, it has no power to effect a spiritual change. As a seal of the covenant of grace, it confirms the enjoyment of saving benefits only to those who are interested in the covenant. As a surety, Christ Jesus is regarded as one with those for whom He engaged in covenant. His finished work is perfect; and every sinner to whom his righteousness is legally reckoned must be justified at once and for ever. It is surely preposterous to suppose one part of this righteousness given in infancy, and the rest at a subsequent period, or given and afterwards withdrawn. Such are the results of resting the hope of infant salvation upon a foundation laid in mere human fancy, or upon the vain attempt to bring the doubtful or erroneous expressions of human formularies into accordance with the Word of God.

The salvation of infants dying in infancy may be shown to rest upon a foundation much more secure and stable. Christian faith and parental hope must be fixed on the unchangeable Word of God, if they would minister solid peace, or be as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast in the day of trial. A few considerations may be briefly stated, as guiding to right views on this important subject.

M. A., F. S. A., Rector of All-Hallows, Great and Less, London. Second edition. London, 1850.

¹ "I know not," says Mr Goode, "why any one should quarrel with the term *infantine regeneration*, more than with the apostolic term *infantine holiness*, used in a similar sense. But there comes a further question as to what this regeneration is, and whether one who may have been rightly called regenerate as an infant, is therefore to be so considered as an adult? Clearly not; because, by the Word of God, personal faith is essential to the regeneration of an adult. The child, in passing from an infantine state to a state of responsibility, goes through a complete change of condition."—*Doctrine of Church of England, &c.*, pp. 13-221. Dr Jackson, another advocate of the same doctrine, quoted by Mr Goode, says: "The same measure of regeneration which sufficeth children or infants dying before they come to the use of reason, will not suffice those who attain to the use of reason, or years of discretion."—Goode's *Doctrine of the Church of England, &c.*, p. 14.

It must always be borne in mind, that if any provision has been made for the spiritual welfare of infants, *they must be dealt with substantially on the same principles as other saved sinners are treated.* There is, indeed, a peculiarity in their case, as being free of actual sin, and as being incapable of exercising thought or understanding on the truth spoken. But still, they are, like all others of the human family, fallen, guilty, and depraved. They were each one shapen in iniquity, and in sin did their mother conceive them. They have the same natural corruption as adults, and from this, as a polluted fountain, issues forth all actual sin. Hence they are far from God and at enmity with Him, exposed to his fearful wrath and curse, and unspeakably needing his salvation. Besides, *the salvation which they require is a "common salvation."* If saved at all, they must be saved substantially in the same way as adult sinners. They must be made partakers of salvation through the covenant of grace. Their nature must be changed. They must be justified through the righteousness of Christ, adopted into the family of God, and fully saved through the redemption of Christ, and the renewal of the Holy Spirit.¹

Keeping these two statements in view, we observe—

1. That the salvation of *infant children can only be through sovereign grace*, and that, however young, they *are capable of being subjects of grace.* Salvation by grace is the glory of the Gospel. Since the fall, no other method of salvation has been revealed, and by no other have sinners been reconciled to God, or brought home to heaven. None are saved as being innocent, or as having contracted only a small measure of guilt and defilement through the primal apostasy. Accordingly, when the apostle contrasts the federal headship of Adam and of Christ, and sets in opposition to the reign of death, which was introduced through the first offence, the reign of grace, he represents infants, "who sinned not after the similitude of Adam's transgression," as liable to death, and then triumphs in the extent of the reign of grace. "For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many." "For if by one man's offence, death reigned by one; much more they who receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ."² Here, while the reigns of death and of grace are

¹ See Buchanan on *The Office and Work of the Holy Spirit*, pp. 214, 215.

² Romans v. 15, 17.

contrasted, and the latter is represented as more sure and glorious than the former, it seems every way reasonable to regard infant children as to some extent subjects of the dominion of grace. Through the headship of Adam they are included with their parents in the "disobedience of one," and share the ruinous consequences of the fall. May not the children of believing parents be also included in the federal representation of Christ, the Second Adam, and thus share the blessed effects of redemption? Without pretending to determine the number or the classes that receive "abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness," we may safely affirm that a very considerable number in infancy may be rescued from the dark dominion of death, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. If they are dealt with as guilty, and were by nature infected with the poison of sin, they are certainly capable of having the Saviour's righteousness imputed to them for justification, and of being made partakers of the Divine nature. The freeness and richness of the grace of God afford a large ground for godly parents to trust and hope for the salvation of their infant seed. They have encouragement to take hold of God's covenant, not only for themselves, but for their offspring. The same sovereign mercy that reached them when perishing, and rescued them from ruin, can avail to deliver their infant children too; and they can have no higher ground of rejoicing, in the prospect of their own and their children's salvation completed, than that the "head-stone" should be "brought forth," with "shoutings of grace, grace unto it."

2. *It is as redeemed by the blood of Christ alone that infants are saved.* While the fountain-spring of human salvation is grace, the blessed channel of conveyance is the blood of the Lamb. All who come home to glory are *blood-washed*; and all, as they wave palms of victory, sing the same song of triumph, "Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, . . . to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever."¹ Redemption implies that its subjects were once under captivity and spiritual bondage; and in this state are all infants by nature, incapable of delivering themselves, and without hope of deliverance by created power. The perfection of the redemption finished—the infinite value of the atonement of Christ, as well as the unspeakable condescension and compassion of the Redeemer—afford strong grounds of trust that infant children may be numbered with the ransomed and

¹ Revelation i. 5, 6.

redeemed of the Lord. When the Saviour took "little children up in his arms, put his hands on them, and blessed them,"¹ He did this not merely as an expression of tenderness and benevolence, but in his official character as a Redeemer, and in the exercise of his public ministry. When he added that "of *such* is the kingdom of God," meaning that not only in disposition, but even in age, such were proper members of the Church on earth and in heaven, He exhibited them as objects of a Saviour's blessing. Now that redemption is finished—while the Redeemer is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever"—there is ample ground to believe that the blood of the Lamb will avail for the salvation of tender little ones; and that among the great multitude that shall come to heaven will be infants that were dedicated to God, and whom the compassionate Shepherd of Israel gathered with his arm and blessed.

3. *Christian parents have large ground to pray and hope for the salvation of their infant children.* With reference to the infant seed of unbelievers, as it appears to us, Scripture is entirely silent, and it behoves us to affirm nothing positively, as to whether they are saved or not. There is an obvious propriety in this that does not apply to believers; and the Spirit may have, of purpose, left this matter in darkness, to restrain presumptuous speculation, and to impress upon all parents the awful necessity of seeking for themselves personal salvation, as they would have comfort respecting the final condition of their children. While we are not permitted to speculate respecting the eternal state of the infant seed of unbelieving or irreligious parents, we may safely leave them in the hands of Him who, as the Sovereign Judge of all, will do what is right, and whose goodness is over all his works.

Believing parents have, however, gracious encouragement to trust that the salvation of their seed dying in infancy is secure. The promise is to them and their children; and this promise—a compend of the new covenant—assures them of full salvation for themselves, and at the same time seems to hold forth a similar assurance on behalf of their infant offspring. Children, while in a state of infancy and childhood, are not only so absolutely dependent on their parents, as to be regarded by the laws and usages of society as one with them, but, under both the former and later dispensations of the covenant, there exists a kind of moral identity between believing parents and their children. There is a *gracious* connection between them,

¹ Mark x. 16.

such that if children die in infancy, there is strong ground to hope that, in terms of the promise, God is their portion and salvation. If, in the Divine purpose, any of the children of faithful parents have not been predestined to life eternal, they shall live, till, by their own personal act, they shall reject the offers and renounce the hopes of the Gospel. The extensive promise and this divinely established connection afford to believing parents ample grounds of pleading for the welfare of their children. They have, indeed, the same warrant to pray and hope for the salvation of their infant children, as they have to confide in the covenant of peace for their own salvation. Faith, taking hold of the encouraging promise in the one case, may appropriate it in the other; and may receive the blessed end—the salvation of their children's souls as well as their own. On such a ground, it seems probable, David bowed down in resignation to the Divine disposal, when his infant child was taken away. The expression that he uttered must mean more than that he expected shortly to be with his child in the state of the dead. Such a sense would be frigid, and would furnish no adequate reason for the calmness and joy of the pious monarch, when his child was removed by death. His resignation arose from his having obtained a gracious answer to prayer. Remembering his own sin, he wept and made supplication, and was doubtless more concerned about the salvation of his child than about the preservation of its life. His prayer was answered; and in the assurance conveyed to his spirit of its eternal welfare, his griefs were dispelled, and he gave utterance to the sentiment of joyful resignation, "I shall go to him, but he shall not return unto me."¹

Again, *the seal of the covenant is provided, and parents and their infant children are included in it.* On God's part, this is a gracious attestation of his purpose of mercy toward both, and of his confirming to them his covenant-favour, and the precious

¹ 2 Samuel xii. 23. On this passage Matthew Henry remarks, in his usual quaint but pithy style: "Secondly, I shall go to him to heaven, to a state of blessedness which even the Old Testament saints had some expectation of. Godly parents have great reason to hope concerning their children that die in infancy, that it is well with their souls in the other world; for the promise is to us and to our seed, which shall be performed to those that do not put a bar in their own door, as infants do not. . . . God calls them his children that are born unto Him; and if they are his, He will save them. This may comfort us when our children are removed from us by death; they are better provided for, both in work and wealth, than they could be in this world. We shall be with them shortly to part no more."—*Henry's Exposition, in loco.*

promises which convey it to the heirs of salvation. In baptism, He provides an ordinance for believing parents dedicating to Him their offspring; and this intimates his willingness to accept of their faithful surrender. The chief design of giving up children to God is, that they may be saved; and when all is so mercifully provided to comfort the hearts of godly parents, and to encourage them to fervent prayer in behalf of their infant offspring, there is surely strong ground to hope that these prayers shall be graciously heard, and that in the case of those dying in infancy, they will be answered in their eternal salvation.¹

The Scriptures, moreover, record *the instances of distinguished servants of God, who were subjects of grace in infancy*. The Saviour himself, the vital Head of the Church, had from the womb the Spirit without measure to sanctify his humanity. He is styled "the Holy Child Jesus" in his birth and infancy; and set forth as the perfect model to which all the members of his mystical body are to be conformed. There is every reason to conclude, that some of his redeemed ones share in this conformity, from the earliest dawn of their existence. Of John the Baptist, the angel predicted, "He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb."² God declared of Jeremiah, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee."³ Timothy is commended as having "known the Scriptures from childhood;" and the inspired declaration concerning him seems to imply that he was early a partaker of "like precious faith, as distinguished his mother and grandmother."⁴

The annals of the Church and of believing families record instances not a few of children that were dedicated to God being called in infancy, and whether removed by death, or spared for usefulness, giving marked indications of being

¹ "When a child is thus baptized on the strength of a parent's faith, we see the federal principle which pervades the scheme of grace as well as the covenant of works, and the parent is impressively reminded of his responsibility, as being answerable to God for his child, at least during its infancy or non-age. Whether, therefore, we consider baptism as a sign of grace, or as a seal of the covenant, or as a visible witness for the truth, or as an intelligible symbol of spiritual blessings, it is fraught with profound instruction; and not less fraught with encouragement to faith, since it is a true sign, and a real seal, and ought to be regarded by every parent as a pledge of his child's interest in the covenant of grace, and as a motive and stimulus to hope, and pray, and labour for its everlasting salvation."—*Buchanan on the Holy Spirit*, pp. 229, 230.

² Luke i. 15.

³ Jeremiah i. 5.

⁴ 2 Timothy iii. 15; i. 5.

interested in the common salvation. The hope of Christian parents about their infant offspring is no vain illusion or idle expectation. The cases related by President Edwards, in his *Narrative of the Revival of Religion in Northampton*, of children savingly impressed in infancy; and by Janeway in his *Token for Children*, of the early piety and happy deaths of many in childhood, furnish cheering evidence that grace is not unfrequently implanted in the dawn of existence. Of the youthful martyr, James Renwick, it is recorded, that at the infantile age of two years, he gave evidence of some gracious motions of the Spirit. The mother of the excellent Dr Payson of America was accustomed to say that she could assign no date to the commencement of vital religion in his heart, so early did he show the work of grace in his temper, and words, and actions. The history of godly families supplies many instances consoling to the hearts of Christian parents, and illustrative of the sovereign power of Divine grace, in which children dying in childhood gave pleasing evidence prior to their removal, of being blessed of the Lord. From such instances, as well as from the connection of parents and their seed in the provision and seal of the covenant of grace, we are warranted to conclude that parents may not only indulge the hope of the salvation of their children dying in infancy, but may even *come to a blessed assurance on this subject*.

As believers may make their own "calling and election sure," so they may arrive at a comfortable assurance in relation to the present safety and future welfare of their children. How this precious privilege is realized, it may not be easy to explain to those who are strangers to the feelings of believing experience, or who do not possess the *witness of the Spirit*. But, notwithstanding, this presents no hindrance to its actual enjoyment. By following them "who through faith and patience inherit the promises," and giving "all diligence," a Christian parent may, for himself, attain to "the full assurance of hope unto the end," and, in a similar way, may he come to partake of a joyful hope respecting his infant offspring. Relying on the Divine promise—taking hold of God's covenant, and receiving the answer of prayer, he may realize the seal and earnest of the Spirit, and know that not only is an inheritance reserved for him in heaven, but also for those who were lent him of the Lord—who were early dedicated to God, for whom he frequently and earnestly prayed, and whom he desired above all to train for Christ's service. Answers of believing prayer are

vouchsafed in various ways, and the vow made in faith God not only accepts, but at times makes his servants who tender it know that what they have committed to Him He will keep to the day of redemption. Whether the matter is made clear to others or not, a believing parent may have it assured to his own heart, that the infants that he brought to Christ have been embraced in his arms and blessed—that the lambs that were entrusted to the Good Shepherd have been laid in his bosom, and in death are taken home to his fold in glory.

Such an assurance, however, given to a godly parent, is replete with support and consolation, when he is called to mourn over the blighting of domestic hopes—in the removal by death of infant children. Few afflictions affect more tenderly the hearts of Christian parents, or form to them a greater exercise of faith than this. To see a lovely opening flower nipped at once, and all its beauty decayed—to witness the sufferings and death of a tender infant, and know that these sufferings are inflicted in consequence of the depraved nature which it inherits from parents—to think that the visitation may be sent as the punishment of parental sin, and to be unable either to alleviate the bodily sufferings of the child, or to convey Divine truth to its mind,—these are some of the sorrows which occasionally distress the hearts of Christian parents, and which are felt to be peculiarly poignant and overpowering. Under such a trial, they should walk by faith and not by sight. The compassionate Saviour is present to wipe away their tears, bear their burdens, and hear their prayers, and He is able to “save to the uttermost,” because “He ever liveth to make intercession.” The little ones that were given to parents, as only lent them for a time, He has a sovereign right to reclaim. In their death, He can and will receive them into his compassionate arms, to bless them and make them blessed for evermore.¹ Their removal

¹ The following appropriate expressions on this point are from the conclusion of Tweedie's little work on the *Sacrament of Baptism*:—“And now imagine that you see the funeral of some little child: fancy it one of your own. The coffin is lowered into the narrow house. The parent's tear has fallen on it. The sigh of sympathy has been heaved by the bystander. The heart has glanced at the mother, as she sits in her chamber childless and weeping. ‘Dust to dust, ashes to ashes,’ is the dirge, and the mourners return to their homes. Now, this child belonged either to a Christian father, or to an unconverted man. The *Christian*, led by God's Spirit, sought to give his child in spirit to Christ. When the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost was pronounced over him, it was not a mere ceremony, but a sacrament. He has, therefore, humble hope. He can rest on promises. He can trust the God of grace and truth. With the Bible

from the embrace of sorrowing parents is for their eternal felicity ; and is, at the same time, a high honour conferred upon parents who nursed them for God, in that they are taken home to heaven, to be jewels in the King's diadem of glory, and to be attendants in his palace for ever. They are *lambs* speedily carried out of the wilderness, and beyond the reach of evil beasts of prey, to the heavenly pastures. They are *lilies*, gathered to bloom in the garland of glory for ever. Such bright hopes should produce calm resignation in the bosom of bereaved parents, and should lead them to rejoice in tribulation.

"I have had six children," said the excellent Elliott, the North American missionary, "and this is my sweet comfort, that they are all either *on* Christ or *in* Christ. Three of them I had hoped would have served my Master on earth ; but it seemed otherwise to his sovereign wisdom. He took them to serve Him in the upper sanctuary, and what am I to speak against my Master's will?" Like the bereaved mother, the woman of Shunem, a Christian parent, as he subscribes to the Divine disposal, will be enabled to say, "IT IS WELL." The privilege of being entrusted with an immortal being to train for God, and of having a tender child made partaker of the grace of salvation, and taken home to the Father's house, is an abundant compensation for all a parent's anxieties, and trials, and sorrows. The period of separation is but brief. The

before him, he can dry his tears, and be comforted. . . . 'Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages,' may be regarded as words of encouragement to parents that would train their offspring for God ; and when these words are in spirit obeyed, 'The voice of rejoicing and salvation may be heard in the tabernacles of the righteous'" (Ps. cxviii. 15). In contrast with this, the case of an irreligious parent, in the death of a child, is thus presented :—"What hope can the *unconverted man cherish!* Not one heartfelt prayer ever was offered by him. The baptism of his child was but a superstitious ceremony, and what spiritual benefit can accrue? This man presumes that his child is happy, and it may be so. Of that we know nothing ; it is one of the secret things that belong to the Lord our God. But we may ask, What right has such a parent to expect such a result to follow his neglect? The child may be safe in the bosom of his heavenly Father, but it is so in spite of its earthly parent ; and when he and his little one meet in the presence of God, if his child appear among the ransomed of the Lord, he will implore no blessing on the head of his father. 'I have told him that I will judge his house for ever for the iniquity which he knoweth ; because his sons made themselves vile, and he restrained them not. And therefore have I sworn unto the house of Eli, that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be purged with sacrifice nor offering for ever' (1 Sam. iii. 13, 14). These are the words in which God would warn and startle parents that are remiss."—*The Sacrament of Baptism*, pp. 121-123.

“land afar off” is brought near to the eye of faith, and becomes more dear to believing hope, as some that were a part of ourselves have already entered on its possession, and may be among the first that shall welcome believing parents to heaven. The full reunion of believing families is reserved for heaven. The mutual recognition of believing parents and dedicated children in the Canaan above will greatly enhance the joys of the better country. When faithful parents shall receive their own bright reward, it will fill up the measure of their felicity, to have their children joint-partakers of the bliss of heaven, and to be able to say, in ecstatic wonder, as they stand in the glorious presence of the King, “BEHOLD WE, AND THE CHILDREN WHICH GOD HATH GIVEN US.”

CONCLUSION.

THE holy ordinance which we have been considering is to be regarded not only as a blessed *privilege*, but is likewise fraught with the most solemn and weighty *instruction* to the whole Church. To Christian families especially, it is eminently fitted to teach, in the most affecting and impressive manner, truths of the highest value. While parents may derive from it direction, encouragement, and consolation, children may also receive from their baptism early spiritual impressions, and may be actuated to a life of holy devotedness. In connection with the administration of baptism, the New Testament. Elijah "turned the hearts of fathers to their children, and of children to their fathers;" and the same sacred rite, under the blessing from above, may still be a powerful means of removing parental neglect and filial disobedience, and thus of drying up the sources of manifold and widespread evils that afflict society. Notwithstanding the low, inadequate views respecting baptism that, in our day, are extensively prevalent, and its diversified abuses, this ordinance, if duly considered and properly improved, is calculated to be the instrument of revival and blessing to the Church and to Christian families. Ministers, in its administration, may learn to feel more deeply the value of souls for which they are called to watch as they that must give account; and to perceive more clearly the excellency of the blessings of redemption, which are presented in lively and significant symbols. The members of the Church may be led not only to feel the vast importance of salvation, and of the privileges of the house of God, but to realize, at the same time, their own baptismal covenant, and to cherish a solemn prayerful interest in the spiritual welfare of the infant members of the Church. That is a work of revival begun, in which the hearers of the Gospel and the members of the Church are brought to feel the worth of the soul, the unspeakable value of the great salvation, and their own obligations to be the Lord's; and are excited to pray fervently and labour diligently for the advancement of Christ's cause and kingdom in the world. While the Spirit of grace

and power alone can produce such impressions, and can impel to such efforts, baptism, when observed in a spiritual manner, is an ordinance admirably conducing to these high ends. Purified from abuses which have long marred its simplicity, and perverted it from its proper ends, dispensed in public, and with befitting solemnity, and its practical influence constantly impressed, it is an institution that brightly reflects the glory of the King of Zion, and diffuses a radiance of light and love throughout the Church.

Some distinguished writers have even regarded baptism as the great means of *national reformation*.¹ Although we may hesitate to adopt fully their sentiments on this article, yet we cannot doubt, that were the scriptural doctrines connected with baptism generally taught and embraced, and were the obligation of the baptismal vow properly felt throughout the community, many of the evil streams which pollute society would be dried up, and the righteousness which exalts nations would be promoted. We have seen that the principle of a thorough scriptural education is properly deduced from baptismal dedication; and in this the rulers and people of a nation, as well as the members of the Church, have a deep interest, inasmuch as education moulds the mind and character, and fixes the destinies of a community. It were easy, moreover, to show that the baptismal engagement involves the idea of *national covenanting*. The national society is the aggregate of the individuals that compose it, and if each of these has been dedicated to God, then it is evident that the whole are under a paramount obligation to avouch the Lord to be their God; and, moreover, that, as in the case of the parental vow, so there is a descending obligation in the scriptural vows of the nation.

To the *baptized*, whether in youth or in adult age, this ordinance addresses the most weighty counsels, as it encourages to walk in all holy obedience. It is recorded, that when individuals were baptized in the primitive Church, they were arrayed in white robes, to indicate their cleansing from sin, and to declare their intention thenceforth to maintain a life of unspotted purity. At the same time, they were addressed in these words: "Receive this white and immaculate garment, and bring it forth without spot before the tribunal of Jesus

¹ This view is ably advocated by the Rev. Henry Budd, in his *Helps for the Young; or, Baptismal Regeneration, according to the Services of the Established Church*, 2 vols. 12mo. The work contains some excellent sentiments, well expressed, on the subject of Scriptural Education.

Christ." "They were thus considered as engaged to that strict and holy life, which Jesus Christ has left us by his doctrine and example."¹ Baptized persons, indeed, rest under the most weighty obligations to imitate the Saviour's perfect example, and to walk as He also walked. The Apostle Paul addressing such declares: "*As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*"² Herein consist their highest privilege and paramount duty. Baptism is the expressive sign of union to Christ, and those who receive it in faith are regarded in the face of the Anointed, and as one with Him—their glorious vital Head. By providing for them this seal of the covenant, God graciously intimates his design to bestow upon them eternal salvation, and to put upon their whole persons the righteousness and image of his Son. Theirs it is to put on Christ daily in believing, and to study and practise increasing conformity. As dedicated ones, they are required to live not to themselves, but to shine as lights in the world, and in all things to aim to promote the Redeemer's glory. Incorporated by baptism into one body with the faithful in all ages, they should learn to love all that love the Lord Jesus with a pure heart, and to cultivate with them a holy and constant fellowship. Forgetful of this, and unmindful of the holy separation from the world to which baptism calls them, the members of the Church lose their distinctive character. The love of many waxes cold, perilous times come, and selfishness, alienation, and enmity reign where self-denial and fraternal affection ought to abound.

The practical improvement of baptism, under the blessing of the Spirit, will restore to the Church its primitive glory and beauty. As in apostolic times, the religion of love will again prevail throughout the Church—healing its manifold divisions, and exhibiting before the world the excellence and attractive power of the Christian profession. A Pentecostal shower of the Spirit will produce the same blessed effects as in the days of old. "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." "None of them said that aught that he had was his own, but they had all things common." and "did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart." Thus will Christians again know and feel how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell in unity; and the sweet counsels of the loving apostle will be transcribed in their whole spirit and intercourse. "BELOVED, LET US LOVE ONE ANOTHER: FOR

¹ See Cave's *Primitive Christianity*.

² Galatians iii. 27.

LOVE IS OF GOD ; AND EVERY ONE THAT LOVETH IS BORN OF GOD, AND KNOWETH GOD." ¹

And, finally, Christians are encouraged, in improving their baptism, to hope for victory in death, and for a blessed resurrection unto life everlasting. "If we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection." "Now, if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him."² Laying hold on eternal life, and frequently renewing our engagement to be the Lord's, we may entertain a joyful hope, which may grow up to a blessed assurance—"As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness : I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." "Thou wilt show me the path of life : in thy presence is fulness of joy ; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."³

¹ John iv. 7.

² Romans vi. 5, 8.

³ Psalm xvii. 15 ; xvi. 11.

A P P E N D I X.

I.—BAPTISMAL REGENERATION, pp. 4, 54, &c.

THE dogma of Baptismal Regeneration—to which frequent reference has been made in the preceding treatise, both in connection with the doctrine of the sacrament, and with its practical tendency—is essentially Popish, and its maintenance in any form in the Protestant Churches affords painful evidence of the existence therein of a portion of the leaven of Antichrist. The sentiment that regeneration is effected by baptism, and is inseparable from it, is taught in the most plain and positive terms in the authorized books of the Romish Church, and is properly to be considered a cardinal doctrine of the Popish system, from which others of its most intolerant and dangerous doctrines are clearly deducible. The Council of Trent declares: “If any one shall affirm that by these sacraments grace is not conferred, in consequence of the *work performed*, but that faith in the Divine promise is of itself sufficient to obtain grace, let him be accursed.”¹ In a book approved of by Romish dignitaries, and extensively used by Romanists, it is declared: “Before baptism, we are in the condition of infidels out of the state of grace; by it we are made members of the Church, and the habit of faith, with other virtues, is infused into our souls. By our first birth, we are born in sin, children of wrath; by baptism, we are *born again*, and become the adopted children of God. By our first birth, we are born to eternal misery; by our second, we are born to eternal life; for if sons of God, we are also heirs of heaven; for which reason baptism is called regeneration, because by it we are *born again of God*.”² Romanists believe that grace is literally in the sacrament, connected with it as the fruit is with the tree; and one of their latest and most distinguished writers (Dr Wiseman) expressly says: “Whatever impugns baptismal regeneration, is, in truth, destructive of baptism as a sacrament.”³ According to this system, the sacraments cease to be signs, and there is no distinction between the grace which they communicate and that which they exhibit or represent. The Popish tenet is, that in all cases the sacrament conveys the grace which it symbolizes. It needs no argument to show that this takes away altogether the sacrament as a significant rite of the Church, and is irreconcilably at variance with the nature of the sacramental institutions as exhibited in the Scriptures.

Baptism is, on the Popish principle, essential to salvation; and children

¹ See *Acta Concil. Trident.*

² *The Poor Man's Catechism; or, The Christian Doctrine Explained*, by the Rev. John Anselm Mannock.

³ *Wiseman's Three Lectures on the Catholic Hierarchy*, Lect. ii. p. 14. London, 1850.

dying unbaptized are therefore excluded from happiness. The Romish tradition is, that such do not suffer the utmost torments of hell, but that they are confined in a part of the place of punishment called *Limbus Infantum*, from which there is no release. Moreover, by the Popish doctrine, baptism confers a character which cannot be lost. The baptized person becomes a member of the true Church; and though he may fall from grace, and even perish in mortal sin, he is still regenerated. Hence, likewise, the Church and all who are called Christians are one and the same. Bellarmine declares: "All are included in the Church, even though they be vile, unprincipled, and impious."¹ On this ground it is that all who are baptized in any way, even heretics, are claimed as belonging to the Romish Church; and Papal authorities teach that all means are lawful to reduce such back to obedience, and failing this, to cut them off as rotten branches.² Justly has it been remarked by an able American author: "Nothing but her want of power, and the ascendancy of Protestantism, compels the Church of Rome to hold her obnoxious ordinances in abeyance; although the assumed Divine authority for such decrees must for ever be asserted by those who sincerely embrace the Roman Catholic faith."³ From the dogma of baptismal regeneration flow almost all the other errors of the Church of Rome respecting the other six sacraments; and it has been justly observed, that, so long as it is believed, there is a wide door kept open for the entrance of all other antichristian doctrines and usages. The grand means of overturning the imposing superstructure of Romish error is the Word of God; and if scriptural views of the nature, ends, and uses of the sacrament of baptism are diligently inculcated, and faithfully received and maintained, the fundamental falsehood of the system will become apparent, and its rejection must follow.

The doctrine of baptismal regeneration, as taught by Episcopalians in these countries, assumes a variety of aspects, some of them very nearly related to the Popish tenet on the subject; while there are others which, though we may see cause to reject, it would be evidently unfair to represent as akin to the Romish error. There is no doubt that several of the doctrinal symbols of the Church of England afford countenance to baptismal regeneration; and the justness of the sentiment uttered by a distinguished prelate seems to be unquestionable. The Bishop of London, in a charge delivered in 1842, said: "The opinion which denies baptismal regeneration might possibly, though not without great difficulty, be reconciled with the language of the twenty-seventh article; but by no stretch of ingenuity, no latitude of explanation, can it be brought to agree with the plain, unqualified language of the offices for baptism and confirmation."

Dr Halley, in his *Lectures on Baptism*, divides the views held by Episcopalian writers on regeneration as connected with baptism, into the four following classes:—

I. "Baptism so introduces a person into the evangelical covenant as to

¹ "Includuntur omnes alii, etiamsi reprobi, scelesti et impii sunt."—*Bellarmino. De Eccles. Milit.*, c. ii. Quoted by Hagenbach, *Hist. of Doct.*, vol. ii. p. 279.

² Peter Dens asserts: "Although heretics be beyond the pale of the Church, they still continue subject to the Church by reason of baptism, whence she deservedly lays hold on them as deserters from her camp, that they may be compelled to return." And again: "Heretics are not in the Church as it regards the union of charity and the communion of saints. That they are not in the Church as it regards subjection to it is denied; for by baptism they became subject to the Church, and they remain personally subject thereto wherever they are."—See Dens' *Theology*, tom. ii., as quoted by Elliot, in his *Delineation of Popery*, pp. 119, 447, 448.

³ Elliot's *Delineation of Popery*, vol. ii. p. 120.

give him a right to all its external privileges, by the good use of which he may acquire a title to everlasting life.

2. "Baptism so changes the federal condition of a person, as to bestow upon him an immediate title to eternal life, which he retains until it be forfeited by sin.

3. "Baptism produces a moral and spiritual change upon the soul in connection with the federal change of condition, which entitles him to eternal life.

4. "Baptism is the medium through which a moral and spiritual change is, although not invariably, yet so frequently produced, as to warrant the Church, though not with certainty, yet in the judgment of charity, to declare the person to be regenerate."

The first two views, which are maintained by such writers as Waterland and Bishop Van Mildert, are evidently not liable to the grave objections which are applicable to the others. According to them, regeneration does not mean any internal change whatever, but only a federal change of condition. Still they cannot be reconciled with scriptural views of the subject. They regard baptism as placing its subjects in a salvable state; and all unbaptized persons as in a condition in which it is not possible for them to be saved. The Scriptures, on the contrary, teach that all men to whom the Word is proclaimed are bid welcome to the privileges of the Gospel; and by faith in the gracious promise and offer, sinners may be saved, "antecedent to any sacrament, and independent of it." On these two theories, too, it is obvious that there is little or no hope of salvation for infants who may die without having been admitted to baptism.

The third view is that of the Puseyite or Tractarian party, of whose sentiments the *Tracts for the Times* are the exponent, and the Bishop of Exeter its chief living advocate. It is, to all intents, the same as the Popish tenet to which we have referred, or, as the prelate just named has declared—on this article "the Churches of Rome and England are agreed." According to this view, by the application of water to the body, and repeating a form of words, the individual baptized becomes a Christian in heart and character. He is brought into a state of grace, his past sins are forgiven, and he is an heir of eternal life. The person baptized is truly regenerated; and though, by some of the party, it is admitted that the virtue of baptism may be lost through aggravated criminality, others maintain that, notwithstanding the greatest falls, the salvation of the baptized is secure. It only requires the important addition which Puseyite divines make, in maintaining that baptism can only be administered by those who have been episcopally ordained; and then we have the Prelatical Church claiming, according to the intolerant assumption of the Papacy, the exclusive privilege of salvation for those within her pale, while all others are either doomed to hopeless perdition, or left to "the uncovenanted mercies of God." The sentiments of some of the opponents of Tractarianism, such as Mr Gorham and Mr Goode, we have already noticed in the chapter on Infant Salvation.

The fourth theory mentioned by Dr Halley is that maintained by not a few of the Evangelical section of the Church of England; and, in particular, it is stated and defended by Mr Faber—the distinguished writer on prophecy—in his *Primitive Doctrine of Regeneration*. He maintains that "the connection between baptism and regeneration is *not inseparable*, but that there are other modes of regeneration; yet as it is one mode in which the grace of regeneration is frequently imparted, the Church—as it must pronounce

some opinion—pronounces the most charitable, and declares the most charitable.” Mr Faber elsewhere says: “I never yet happened to meet with an English clergyman who had either succeeded in persuading himself or had even attempted to persuade himself, that his church did not consider the grace of regeneration to be conveyed in baptism.”¹ There are various serious objections to this theory. Regeneration, according to Mr Faber, depends very much on the worthy reception of the rite of baptism. In the case of infants, he supposes that some are worthy recipients by “the preparatory ingraftation of incipient holiness.” All that can be said of these views is, that they are mere gratuitous assumptions, destitute of authority from the Word of God. For a pretty full and able refutation of these different theories of baptismal regeneration, see Halley’s *Lectures on Baptism*. Lecture v. The two things that lead so many excellent persons of the Prelatical Church to plead for baptismal regeneration are, first, their holding the doctrine of general atonement; and second, the vain attempt to reconcile the expressions of the Catechism, and of the Baptismal and Confirmation Services, with the teachings of Holy Scripture. The Tractarians likewise, lay a great stress on the writings of the Christian fathers, as inculcating their views of the ordinance. It has, however, been clearly proved by those who have most carefully investigated the subject, that though the language employed by some of the earlier Christian writers on baptism was of doubtful meaning, yet there was not the faintest trace of the dogma of baptismal regeneration, as it is held by Romanists and Puseyites, till corruption had extensively spread in the Church, in the beginning of the third century.² In its most modified and least objectionable form, this doctrine is “Popery in the Ear,”³ and must be at once repudiated by all Protestants who would successfully resist the progress of Popish delusion.

II.—DR HALLEY’S VIEW OF THE SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM, p. 60.

Although Dr Halley’s *Lectures on Baptism*, to which we have repeatedly referred, bear ample testimony to the learning and research of the author, they yet contain some views which we cannot but regard as fundamentally defective and unscriptural, in relation both to the nature of the sacraments, and to the subjects of baptism. According to Dr Halley, the sacraments are not—as taught by the Puritans, the Westminster Divines, and other Calvinists—“federal rites, or ratifications of the evangelical covenant,” but simply “significant rites, emblems of Divine truth, sacred signs of the evangelical doctrine, designed to illustrate, to enforce, or to commemorate the great and most important truths of the Gospel.” “Baptism,” he adds, “we believe, is the sign of purification on being admitted into the kingdom of Christ, but neither the cause nor the seal of it.”⁴ Such a view of the sacraments is not only most meagre, but it is manifestly inconsistent with plain scriptural statements. Baptism is termed by the apostle “the circumcision of Christ;” and circumcision, which it supplants, is entitled “a sign and seal of the righteousness of faith.”⁵ The baptized are figuratively said to “put on Christ.” Such expressions can never be properly

¹ *Primitive Doctrine of Regeneration*, p. 81.

² Halley’s *Lectures*, p. 244.

³ This is ably shown, though occasionally with caustic severity, in a work recently published, entitled, *Popery in the Full Corn, the Ear, and the Blade*, by Rev. William Marshall. Edinburgh, 1852.

⁴ Halley’s *Lectures on Baptism*, pp. 94, 95.

⁵ Colossians ii. 12; Romans iv. 11.

explained on the principle that makes the sacraments simple signs of Divine truth, as the words employed in preaching the Gospel. Even granting to Dr Halley that they are more "expressive signs," it is yet obvious that there is a sense whereby in baptism we are said to "put on Christ," quite different from the preaching of the Gospel to "every creature."

Moreover, Dr Halley, to make out his system, is obliged to represent the Gospel covenant as pertaining to all classes indiscriminately, and to maintain the defectibility of Divine grace. The covenant with him is not a covenant of salvation, but only of "inceptive rights," easily forfeited, the symbol of which is therefore not distinctive, and not a means of blessing. Dr Halley's principles would appear to countenance universal atonement and common grace; and hence baptism, in his view, is no more to a believer than an unbeliever. Considering the covenant as extending to all to whom the Gospel comes, he pleads for the administration of baptism as the birthright of every person. The ordinance, according to him, is neither a seal of real grace, nor a channel for its conveyance—it is nothing more than an emblem of Divine truth; or, as he attempts to prove, it is a token that all men, at least in Christian lands, are born in a state of grace, and have "an inceptive right to salvation," and shall certainly enjoy it, provided they do not "*forfeit*" it. Such a view of the subject is glaringly opposed to the doctrine of Divine sovereignty, and of the covenant of redemption, as declared in the Scriptures; it is irreconcilable with the manifold scriptural expressions respecting the design and extent of Christ's sacrifice; it is subversive of the purity of the Church, and is fraught with danger to the souls of men.

Following out his scheme to its legitimate consequences, Dr Halley effectually does away the distinction between the Church and the world, and resolutely maintains the right of every human being to baptism. He argues at length that it is the duty of Christian ministers to baptize "all applicants, provided the application does not appear to be made scoffingly and profanely, for that would be a manifest desecration of the service, and all children offered by their parents, guardians, or others who may have the care of them." This sentiment is entertained at present by several ministers in England, and by various distinguished individuals in the continental churches. Dr Halley attempts to sustain the argument for this scheme of indiscriminate baptism, partly by his doctrine of the general extent of the Gospel covenant, and the consequent spiritual relation of all infants to Christ, and partly by the terms of the Gospel commission. He interprets the commission (Matt. xxviii. 19) in the most literal sense of the terms, and holds that as all nations are to be taught and disciplined, so all are to be baptized. We need not say that this is certainly pushing criticism much beyond its legitimate limits. There is surely something more required in order to constitute discipleship than baptism. To be a disciple of Christ implies, in the case of all adults, some knowledge of his character and will, and some measure of obedience to Him. Our Lord himself declares the terms of discipleship to consist in self-denial and forsaking all to follow Him; and says, "If ye continue in my Word, then are ye my disciples indeed." A profession is plainly taken as a pre-requisite to all the cases of adult baptism recorded in the New Testament, whether of John's or of the apostles'. "The commission" evidently implies the necessity of instruction previous to baptism, and the apostolic practice certainly demanded a profession of Christ prior to the administration of the sacred rite. These points are very satisfactorily shown by Dr Wilson, in his excellent work on

Infant Baptism a Scriptural Service, wherein Dr Halley's loose views are carefully examined, and ably refuted.¹ We would deeply regret the spread of such a sentiment among the Congregationalist body, distinguished as they have been for practical religion and Gospel liberty, and for their exertions in behalf of the evangelization of the nations; and we rejoice to find, from a statement made by Dr Campbell in the *Christian Witness*, that it is not likely to spread among the ministers of that body in England. Its adoption would manifestly tend to abolish the distinction between the Church and the world, corrupt the ordinances of religion, and lull men in delusion.

III.—PURIFICATION BY SPRINKLING, p. 95.

In the able *Dissertation on the Mode of Baptism*, by the Rev. William Sommerville, Nova Scotia, to which we have referred, after considering at length the question, What is baptism? Mr S. shows, in a lucid and convincing manner, that, with the exception of Aaron and his sons, "*the purification of persons in water, by the instrumentality of another, was effected in every case by SPRINKLING water upon them.*" He also proves that—1st. "The term *washing* denotes the process by which purification is accomplished." 2d. "*Dipping is never enjoined for the purpose of cleansing or washing the thing dipped.*" 3d. "*Immersion is no more adapted to cleanse than sprinkling.*" 4th. "Complete purification is ascribed to *sprinkling.*" 5th. "There are circumstances connected with the washing of Aaron and his sons which show that they were not *immersed*, in whatever form the prescribed ablution may have been performed." 6th. "Our Lord's declaration to Peter (John xiii. 10) shows that complete cleansing may be by the application of a small portion of the element." As a specimen of Mr Sommerville's clear and forcible manner, we subjoin his remarks on this passage and on the concluding particulars:—

"The remarkable declaration of our Lord to Peter, on the eve of his departure, must confound all reasonings in favour of immersion, founded on the command to wash, as though it must infer an obligation to immerse; and of the Anabaptistical practice, from the nature of baptism viewed as a cleansing ordinance. 'He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.'² Peter's ideas of purification were more carnal, and more nearly allied to the notions of Anabaptists. In his mind, the idea of extensive or complete purification is associated with such an application of water as shall bear some apparent proportion to the effect to be produced. 'Not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.' It is owing to the same earthly apprehensions that the ritual or baptismal washing, which is performed by sprinkling or pouring water upon the person to be cleansed, is now treated by the advocates of immersion with contempt and ridicule; and that a vast amount of laborious argument, not derived from such sources as are accessible to the overwhelming majority of those who are all equally interested in the decision, is profusely expended. Our Lord's definitive sentence, absolutely subversive of anabaptistical speculations, suggests to us a most important evidence of Divine wisdom, in the appointment of rites of purification in particular, and in subsequent allusions to them. The necessity of entire purity must be taught, and, at the same time, the utter inefficiency of external observances to accomplish it, must be kept up before the eye of the mind. It is God alone who sanctifies wholly,

¹ See Chapter IV. on the Subjects of Baptism.

² John xiii. 10.

in soul, in body, and in spirit. The blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of a heifer (the water of separation) cannot sanctify, even partially, nor contribute to the sanctification of the soul. Had a total immersion been requisite, or had the application of the cleansing element to the whole man been enjoined, the mind would have been led into the notion, too much in accordance with the views of the darkened understanding, that there must be some virtue in the symbol. On the other hand, the injunction of a partial application, in order to a total purification, is calculated to anticipate any leaning to a superstitious reliance upon the outward ceremonial. The Saviour says, 'If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.' Then would the disciple say, 'I must be washed.' Again the Saviour says, 'He that is washed, needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.' Now the disciple would very naturally subjoin, 'What is this that He saith? Water can cleanse no farther than it is applied, yet He has averred that a man is clean every whit, in consequence of having had his feet washed. Water is not the real means of the purification intended. Another means, and another than outward purification, are contemplated.' The inquiry, forthwith arising, would have respect to the interpretation of the language of what, from its very form, must appear to be a symbol. The like reflections would be suggested to the mind of the child of God, under the former dispensation, in the observance of the rites of purification enjoined upon him.

"Admitting with unfeigned satisfaction the total absence of all reliance upon a total immersion, in the article of baptism, contemplated as a cleansing ordinance, on the part of many who strenuously contend for it, I submit that the practice of total immersion, in Jew or Christian, is superstitious; that the addition of more water to that which is required and sufficient for sprinkling, that the whole man may be covered, is of the same character with the addition of one immersion to another, and another still, or of oil and salt to the baptismal water, and is adapted to pervert the ideas of Christians, with reference to the intention of an external ordinance, and to leave false and unscriptural impressions, as it proceeds from perverted ideas and false principles. The Greek Christian is as fully entitled to three dips, and the Papist to a little salt and oil, as the Anabaptist to more water than is necessary for aspersion.

"In purification, God discovers a solicitude that nothing to be purified be subjected to a process from which it is not naturally fitted to come forth uninjured. Nothing may be exposed to an ordeal which is calculated to destroy it. 'The gold, and the silver, the brass, the iron, the tin, and the lead, *everything that may abide the fire, ye shall make go through the fire, and it shall be clean: and all that abideth not the fire ye shall make go through the water.*'¹ Here is the evidence, and an exemplification of the principle—a principle strictly adhered to in every part of the Mosaic ritual, a principle diametrically opposed to the supposition that washing necessarily implies immersion, and utterly subversive of the practice of immersion for the purification of persons. Total immersion at once points to the destruction of persons, and is an apt emblem of destruction, not of safety. In a state of total immersion, the functions of life presently experience a suspension, or at least a violent interruption to their exercise, which must soon put a period to temporal existence. The action of the lungs, upon which the movements of the whole animal machine depend, immediately ceases. It is to no purpose to adduce the fact that a man may be immersed, and sustain no permanent or even present injury, when every one knows that

¹ Numbers xxx. 22, 23.

the safety entirely depends upon a speedy extrication from a state of submersion. Death is the issue involved in that state, simply considered; and as it is not insinuated that baptize signifies to *take out* of the water as well as to *put into* it; moreover, as the argument in favour of total immersion is made to turn upon the word *baptize*, and that is said to denote *mode*, and *nothing but mode*, it is plain that, according to the Divine direction, no provision is made for emergence from the water. That Anabaptists have the ideas of immersion and destruction as closely united in their minds as others, is evident from this, that whilst they pertinaciously contend that *baptize* signifies to *immerse*, and nothing but *immerse*, the administrator of the ceremony of immersion finds it expedient to supererogate, and is as careful to take the subjects out of the water as to put them into it.

The whole tenor of Scripture phraseology, respecting the ends fulfilled by coming in contact with water, agrees with the principle stated above, and applied to the solution of the question between immersion in water, and sprinkling or pouring water, in legal washings and baptisms of the former or latter dispensation. In every case in which water is described as *coming upon, from above, poured upon or sprinkled*, it is expressive of a blessing; and, invariably, being immersed in water is expressive of a ruinous calamity to everything destructible by immersion, and from which, as being destructive to persons, the child of God would humbly pray to be delivered. *Being covered with water is never represented as a privilege, but a calamity; never a blessing, but a curse."*

IV.—SCRIPTURAL EDUCATION, p. 198.

National Education. Since the part of this treatise which refers to Scriptural Education was printed, the Ministerial measure for National Education in England and Wales was introduced into Parliament by Lord John Russell. It is gratifying to find from the speech of his lordship, that statesmen are compelled to admit that mere secular education will not meet the wants of the people, nor fulfil the responsibility of rulers in attempting to elevate the intellectual, moral, and social condition of the community. It is now conceded that a religious basis is indispensable to all that deserves the name of education, or that is deserving of the support of the State; and moreover, that the nation has declared that it will not be satisfied with any system of public education of an inferior kind. This is a gratifying token of the progress that right views on education have recently made; and should encourage the friends of Scripture education to persevere in their attempts to introduce the purifying salt of Divine truth into all the seminaries of youth, from the highest to the lowest. In the discussions which are now going forward on the subject of National Education, both in these countries and in America, it is assumed by certain parties that the use of the Scriptures in the public schools, is to make the education *denominational*. In answer to this, the friends of Scriptural Education should ever contend that the Bible is no *sectarian* book—and that alone, by assuming it as the basis of all proper education, can true morality be taught, and the youth of a nation be trained for the due discharge of the duties incumbent upon them as rulers and citizens.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH.

The following extracts from the elaborate work of the Rev. Lyman Coleman, D.D., on *Ancient Christianity Exemplified*, exhibit the remarkable pains taken by parents in the early Christian Church in the religious training of their children :—

“The tender solicitude of these early Christians for the religious instruction of their children, is one of their most beautiful characteristics. They taught them, even at the earliest dawn of intelligence, the sacred names of God and the Saviour. They sought to lead the infant minds of their children up to God, by familiar narratives from Scripture—of Joseph, of young Samuel, of Josiah, and of the holy child Jesus. The history of the patriarchs and prophets, apostles and holy men, whose lives are narrated in the Sacred Volume, were the nursery tales with which they sought to form the tender minds of their children. As the mind of the child expanded, the parents made it their sacred duty and delightful task daily to exercise him in the recital of select passages of Scripture, relating to the doctrines and duties of religion. The Bible was the entertainment of the fireside. It was the first, the last, the only school-book almost, of the child; and sacred psalmody the only song with which his infant cry was hushed as he was lulled to rest on his mother’s arm. The sacred song, and the rude melody of its music, were, from the earliest periods of Christian antiquity, an important means of impressing the infant heart with sentiments of piety, and of imbuing the susceptible minds of the young with the knowledge and the faith of the Scripture. Even in the earliest periods of Christianity, there were those who, like our Watts in modern times, ‘condescended to lay aside the scholar, the philosopher, and the wit, to write little poems of devotion adapted to the wants and capacities of children.’

“The Christian fathers abundantly insist on the duty of giving daily instructions in the family. ‘Speak of Divine things not only in the social circle, but in the family—the husband with the wife—the father with his child; and very frequently renew the subject. Let no man affirm that the child needs not to be addressed on these topics, for they must be discoursed of, not only sometimes, but at all times.’ ‘You must immediately begin to bring up your children in the nurture of the Divine Word.’ ‘Leave to your children God for their inheritance, and you leave them an inestimable treasure.’ Be it our effort and our desire, then, not to leave to them an inheritance, but to leave them in the possession of personal piety. Preach the name and doctrine of Christ on all occasions. Let every master of a family know that this solemn duty rests upon him in regard to all his house. Constantine the Great, though he appointed men of the most approved piety to be the teachers of his children, was himself their instructor in the knowledge of Divine things, to lead them to immortal blessedness. Origen was first and chiefly taught by his father the knowledge of Divine things, and made familiar with the Sacred Scriptures, before he was permitted to give attention to profane literature; and, notwithstanding his vast attainments in every branch of knowledge, he ever continued to make the Scriptures his chief study. Even in his earliest childhood, he was required to commit to memory and to repeat some portion of the Sacred Scriptures.

“The writings of the early Christians are filled with expressions of the deepest solicitude for the piety of their children. The mother of Augustine bewailed the early impiety of her son ‘with tears and sighs more bitter and abundant than those of a mother for the death of her child; for she looked

upon him as already dead in spirit. But the Lord finally heard her prayer, and refused not her tears, for she gave herself wholly unto prayer.' When bewailing his hardened impiety to a Christian friend, he said to her, 'Go in peace; it is impossible that a child of so many tears should be lost.'

"'Children,' says Jerome, 'are a trust committed to us of the Lord, and, therefore, to be trained up with the greatest care. The nearer they are allied to us in the flesh, the more impressive is our responsibility.' Polycarp, the venerable disciple of John, earnestly exhorts parents to bring up their children in the knowledge and fear of God. These brief examples may indicate the pious care of these Christians for the religious education and the conversion of their children. Their great desire and constant endeavour was to train up their children in the fear of God, to conduct their education at home, to withdraw them as much as possible from temptation, and to make them so happy in their own quiet homes, that they should neither desire the noisy amusements of the world, nor subject themselves to its temptations. The children found their happiness in their parents, and the parents in their children. Such families were the nurseries of pure, consistent, efficient churches; such Christians were the lights of the world, which could not be hid—the salt of the earth, which never lost its savour.

" THE DEVOTIONAL EXERCISES OF THE FAMILY.

"These early Christians were examples of devout piety in their families. There, at the domestic altar, they fed the sacred flame of devotion, which burned in their bosom with a triumphant, deathless flame. There they formed and maintained the spirit of a pure, deep, and earnest piety. Every master of a family fulfilled, within the walls of his own house, the office of private pastor, keeping up in it a regular course of reading, prayer, and private instruction to all the members of his household. Thus every private house was, in the words of Chrysostom, a church to itself.

"The influence of pious mothers was also particularly remarkable over their children. Gregory of Nazianzen ascribed his conversion to the piety of his mother Nonna. His brother Cæsarius, by the same means, was enabled to maintain an exemplary life of piety in the court of the emperor. Their sister Gorgonia also religiously walked in the steps of her mother, and was instrumental in the conversion of her husband, and training her children and her nephews in the ways of piety. Theodoret ascribed his conversion, under God, to his pious mother, and Basil the Great to his grandmother, Emilia to his sister Macrina. Augustine and Chrysostom, also, the greatest lights of the ancient Church, were indebted to their pious mothers for those instructions that brought them to the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus.

"The several members of a Christian family were accustomed to rise very early in the morning, and address their thoughts to God by silent ejaculations, by calling to mind familiar passages of Scripture, and by secret prayer. Clement of Alexandria, A. D. 188, was accustomed, whenever he awoke, to call to mind the words of Christ; and often anticipated the dawning of the day in these devout exercises. 'One must arise,' says Basil the Great, 'before the twilight of the morning, to greet with prayer the coming day.' 'Let the sun at his rising find us with the Word of God in hand.' 'Let the day begin with prayer.' 'Soon as the day returns, and before leaving his chamber, the Christian should address his prayer to his Saviour; and before resuming his daily labour, begin the work of righteousness.' 'Let

the child be accustomed, early in the morning, to offer prayer and praise to God ; and at evening again, when the day is past and gone, let him end his labour by bringing his evening offering to the Lord.'

"After their private devotions, the family met for united prayer, which was uniformly accompanied with the reading of the Scriptures. The recital of such doctrinal and practical sentiments as might best fortify them against the prevailing scandals and heresies of the times, constituted also, as it would seem, part of their devotional exercises. In the family, as in all their devotions, the primitive Christians delighted to sing their sacred songs.

"At the table they reverently sought the blessing of God. Several of these examples of prayer before meals are given at length in the fathers. Here also they rehearsed some portions of Scripture and sang praise to God : a custom which Clement of Alexandria and Chrysostom earnestly recommend. The meal being ended, they concluded with prayer, giving thanks for the blessings received, and supplicating a continuance of the Divine mercy. 'As the body requires daily sustenance,' says Chrysostom, 'so the soul needs to be refreshed with spiritual food, that it may be strengthened for its warfare against the flesh.'

"The day was closed by devotions, renewed in much the same manner as in the morning. Such was the pious care with which these Christians ordered their households in the fear of the Lord. Chrysostom made it the first duty of the master of the house 'to seek so to speak and so to act that the spiritual good of the whole household might be promoted ; and of the mistress of the family, while she oversees her domestic affairs, especially to see that all act in the fear of God, and with reference to the kingdom of heaven.'"

V.—ABUSE OF BAPTISM BY IGNORANCE AND SUPERSTITION, p. 179.

There is reason to fear that the sacrament of baptism is, at present, abused by ignorance of its true nature and ends ; and by connecting with its administration superstitious views and usages, to a much greater extent than is generally imagined. Ignorant parents themselves, propelled by superstitious notions, or the desire to be considered Christians, seek the ordinance for their children, while yet they have no proper notion of the spiritual import of baptism, and no sense of the weight of parental obligation. The facility with which many ministers of religion dispense the ordinance to such characters, without taking any pains to instruct them on this subject, confirms them in their ignorance and delusion, and tends manifestly to foster unworthy, superstitious sentiments and feelings concerning one of the most important and significant institutions of our holy religion. The use of *the sign of the cross* in baptism, as it is practised in the Church of England, evidently tends to countenance superstition. It is without any warrant in the Word of God ; and the pleas employed in its favour would be equally available for the Popish usages of employing chrism and spittle, and the candle or taper for exorcism, in baptizing. The private administration of baptism, to which we have referred at length in the treatise, is a prolific source of ignorance and superstition with respect to this ordinance, and should be universally repudiated, and most strenuously opposed, by all who are concerned for the honour of scriptural truth and the purity of the Church of Christ. It deserves to be recorded that a large number of the

best of the English reformers were decidedly opposed to the use of the sign of the cross, and various other human rites, in Divine worship. When the reformation of the Church of England was about to be conclusively settled at an early period of the Church of England, a large number of the most learned and pious divines of that church earnestly petitioned that the sign of the cross in baptism, as well as stated fasts and festivals, godfathers and godmothers in baptism, kneeling at the Lord's Supper, bowing at the name of Jesus, &c., might be abolished. When their petitions were read, and their arguments heard, in the Lower House of Convocation, the vote was taken, and the abolition passed by a majority of those present—forty-three voting in favour of granting the prayer of the petitioners, and thirty-five against it. But when the proxies were called for and counted, the scale was turned; those in favour of the abolition being fifty-eight, and those against it fifty-nine. Thus, by a solemn vote of the Convocation, the several rites that were regarded and publicly complained of as Popish superstitions, and the sign of the cross among the rest, were retained in the Church only by a majority of one. It is with pleasure that we have learned that several of the pious, evangelical ministers of the Prelatical Church in this country insist upon public baptism, and take some pains to instruct their flocks in the nature and objects of the ordinance.

In addition to the historical testimonies which have been already adduced in behalf of public baptism, we give the following:—Cave, in his *Primitive Christianity*, quoting from Tertullian and Justin Martyr, says, "Baptism was seldom done without the presence of the congregation, and that for very good reason, both as it is a principal act of religious worship, and as it is the initiating of persons into the Church, which thereafter ought to be as public as it could, that so the whole congregation might be spectators and witnesses of that profession."¹ Wheatley says, "If we look back unto the practice of the primitive Church, we shall find that baptism was never, except upon extraordinary occasions, done without the presence of the congregation."²

¹ Cave's *Primitive Christianity*, pp. 311-313.

² Wheatley on the *Common Prayer*, p. 326.

II.

A MEMORIAL OF COVENANTING.

P R E F A C E.

THE idea of emitting this "memorial" originated in the writer's proposal to visit the United States of America. As the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian body in that country had adopted measures for the public renewal of the British Covenants,—adapting them to the circumstances of those who acknowledge their moral obligation and adhere to their grand principles, in a different land,—he was desirous of contributing whatever was in his power to further so important a movement. By relating what the Church's exalted Head had done, in leading his servants in one country to pledge themselves anew to his service by sacred vows, and to lift up a standard for despised truths, and by exhibiting the salutary effects flowing from federal dedication, it was hoped that others might be excited and encouraged to "yield themselves to the Lord," and might be directed in the performance of an all-important duty.

Although the greater part of the memorial was written previous to his setting out for America, yet, owing to various pressing engagements, the Author was unable to revise it for the press; and while sojourning in a distant land, he could not find leisure, as he at one time had expected, to have the work issued there. So soon after his return as he could command time, he betook himself to the completion of the narrative. It is now presented to the public, with the design of perpetuating the remembrance of the Lord's covenant-faithfulness toward one portion of his heritage; and with the earnest desire that beloved brethren at a distance, united in the same brotherly covenant, may be encouraged and blessed in their labours and trials for the truth's sake;—and that some who are inquiring after the "GOOD OLD WAY," may be led, by the views here exhibited, to "walk therein," and thus to "find rest for their souls."

In a narrative of covenant-renovation, it seemed proper to

present a condensed argument on behalf of the doctrine of *continued covenant-obligation*, and to give a historical account of the British covenants—of the revival of their principles, and of attempts that have been made for their public renewal—that such as have not ready access to larger works on these subjects may be informed of the solid grounds on which the principles of federal obligation rest, and that those who are desirous of union throughout the churches may have exhibited an approved basis of scriptural fellowship, and co-operation for the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom.

It is scarcely needful to add, that it was far from the writer's intention, by the publication of this memorial, to interfere with the Synod's proposal to emit a narrative of the recent work of covenant-renovation. Such an account would of course be condensed and unique, and of an authoritative character. To effect the different objects to which allusion has been made, this work required to be somewhat diffuse, and to treat of a variety of matters. For the sentiments and views of ecclesiastical movements which it propounds, the writer has no desire that any others save himself should be held accountable.

KNOCKBRACKEN, *April 1857.*

A

MEMORIAL OF COVENANTING.

INTRODUCTION.

THE duty of preserving and perpetuating the remembrance of God's gracious dealings with his Church is frequently enjoined and exemplified in Sacred Scripture. As a chief subject of grateful praise, God's people are commanded to "remember his marvellous works that He hath done ; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth ; O ye seed of Abraham his servant, the children of Jacob his chosen."¹ The Church's pious resolution is declared to show to the generation to come what fathers have told them—"His strength, and the wonderful works which He hath done," and to transmit to posterity "the testimony and law which were left in Israel."²

The faithful have ever shown that alike devout gratitude, and the desire to advance the Divine glory, have prompted them to the ready performance of this duty. The pillars erected on the plains of Moab, at the end of the wanderings of Israel in the Arabian desert ; the stones set up at Gilgal, when the passage of the Jordan had been effected ; that which was selected by Joshua at Shechem, as a witness of renewed covenant-dedication ; the song dictated by the Spirit to celebrate the passage of the Red Sea ; and many of the sweet psalms of David, were designed to preserve the lively remembrance of special Divine interpositions of mercy, and to make future generations acquainted with the displays of the power and grace of God, ever faithful to his covenant. The believing Church is taught to regard the transmission of such a record as not less her duty than her high privilege. "Instead of thy

¹ Psalm cv. 5, 6.

² Psalm lxxviii. 4, 5.

fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth. I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations : therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.”¹ And when eminent deliverances are experienced, and joyful victories have been achieved, the holy rejoicing of Zion is suitably represented, as considering diligently the stability of the Church, and making known to posterity the wonders wrought for her protection. “Walk about Zion, and go round about her : tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks ; consider her palaces ; that ye may tell it to the generation following. For this God is our God for ever and ever : He will be our Guide even unto death.”² On this principle have acted the witnesses for truth in all the bypast ages of the Church’s history. Reformers, confessors, and martyrs have all felt that they owed a special duty to the generations to come. They lived for posterity. Not only did they hold fast and display precious truths entrusted to them ; but they sought likewise, amid manifold conflicts and sufferings, to transmit them uncorrupt to posterity. Their earnest endeavour was to make known God’s mighty acts, in fulfilling his promise, in vindicating his truth, and in supporting and blessing his faithful servants.

The memorials which they have transmitted to us bear testimony to their fervent concern that God might have all the praise. In their estimation, the human instrumentality was nothing, that God might be all and in all. Like the angel worshippers in the prophet’s vision, that cover their feet and veil their faces, they ascribed all excellence and honour to their glorious King, and exclaimed as they bowed at his throne, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts : the whole earth is full of his glory.”³ Similar should be our desire and aim in preserving the memorials of the Lord’s covenant goodness to the Church exhibited in our own day. The men of the present are the fathers of succeeding generations. If their duty is to make honourable mention of the Lord’s faithfulness to their fathers, it is equally incumbent on them to observe and record the doings of his hand, that others coming after them may perpetuate his praise, that race may declare to succeeding race his mighty deeds.

The difficulty of presenting an impartial record of events as they take place, or soon after their occurrence, has been commonly remarked. The history of transactions that effect

¹ Psalm xlv. 16, 17.

² Psalm xlviii. 12-14.

³ Isaiah vi. 3.

important changes in society, it is said, may be better written in the next generation, since the persons concerned in movements as they are taking place are apt to attach to them undue importance; and posterity is better prepared to estimate aright their character, causes, and effects. This may be to some extent true, in reference to matters of mere worldly interest. But in relation to those which have immediate respect to the Divine glory, displayed in interpositions on behalf of the Church of Christ for deliverance and blessing, it is, on the other hand, of primary importance that the record should date from the time that was signalized by special manifestations of Divine favour. Thus vivid impressions of God's mercy are in some sort retained and imparted to others. Those who have witnessed the plentiful effusions of God's Spirit, and have had experience of his covenant-faithfulness, are best fitted, as it is their peculiar duty, to set up a monument of gratitude. The evidence thus furnished in behalf of God's gracious work in Zion, is the most powerful and satisfactory; and in future ages the members of the Church, whether called to conflict and trial, or blessed with eminent privileges, obtain encouragement, and derive motives for devoted effort, and joyful expectation, from considering the Lord's favour vouchsafed to their fathers.

Past periods of revival have been distinguished, not only for the effusion of the Spirit upon the Church, but likewise for the precious records that have been transmitted to us by those who were privileged to witness the glorious displays of Divine power and love, and who had a part in these auspicious movements. We have the inspired memorials of the first Pentecostal shower of the Spirit, and of subsequent revivals, in the times of primitive Christianity,—full, minute, and affecting, written by contemporaneous historians. Many of the leading reformers are the historians of their own times; and amidst labours most abundant, and manifold perils and sufferings, they regarded it as a paramount duty to register with all care what the Lord did in their day for the revival of his truth, for the support and comfort of his faithful servants, and for the confusion of their enemies. The accounts of subsequent revivals, written by those who were concerned in them, and which have been preserved in the Church, have contributed no little to the encouragement and spiritual benefit of God's people. What a blank would be in our theological literature, if the *Memoirs of Livingstone and Whitfield*, of *Brainerd and Payson*; or if *Jonathan Edwards' Narrative of the Revival at Northampton*, or that of *Roby and*

M'Culloch, concerning the work of God at Cambuslang and Kilsyth, were awanting! Brief and scanty as are the records of the Spirit's outpouring at Irvine and Stewartstown, under the ministry of David Dickson, and respecting the awakening at Antrim and the Six Mile Water, in the days of Blair and Livingstone, they are valuable, not only as illustrating the great truth, which Fleming so clearly and fully exhibits, the "fulfilment of Scripture," but as affording bright hopes for the future fortunes of churches and lands that have been visited by waterings of the Spirit. The Church's experience of the Lord's turning again her captivity, and doing great things for her, inspires joyful confidence for the future. "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."¹ The grand incitement and encouragement to believing effort on the part of God's faithful servants for the rebuilding of Zion, and the diffusion of the truth, is furnished by the Lord's past covenant-dealings with his people—"Be strong, all the people of the land, saith the Lord, and work: for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts: according to the Word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not."²

It is a circumstance worthy of particular observation, that in those countries where the profession of Divine truth was ratified and secured by solemn scriptural vows, true religion has been preserved, and political liberty has been transmitted from one age to another, much better than in places where social covenanting was unknown. Revivals of scriptural principle, too, in our day, have occurred more in the former countries than in the latter. Wherever the covenants entered into were full and scriptural, the effects, both in the preservation of truth and purity in the Church, and in securing civil liberty, have been salutary and abiding. This has been remarkably the case with the Waldenses, in Geneva, and in Britain and Ireland. In those parts of the European continent, where scriptural covenants were once publicly taken and sworn, religion and liberty still live, and in our day are rapidly reviving and spreading; whereas in other places, as in the countries where Lutheranism was established, and an imperfect reformation was attained, heresy and corruption have spread, and the precious blessings of evangelical religion and civil

¹ Psalm cxxvi. 6.

² Haggai ii. 4, 5.

freedom are, in a great measure, unknown. Amidst much that is evil yet existing in the churches and political condition of Britain, who can doubt that recent important movements—bringing forth into clearer manifestation the great principles of a martyr-testimony—indicate God's remembrance of his covenant, and warrant the expectation that yet a more powerful and extensive revival will distinguish those sections of the Church, and those lands that were formerly renowned for their solemn federal engagements?

The loving remembrance of scriptural vows, and a renewed sense of their obligation, whether by individuals or communities, are themselves a token of returning Divine favour, and hold out the promise of future more abundant blessing. Under the conviction that recent proceedings in one section of the Redeemer's Church in this land have been the fruits of special goodness, and with the earnest and assured hope that transactions so solemn and joyful will be followed by results of a gracious and permanent character, not only to those who were immediately concerned in them and their descendants, but likewise to other churches, and to the friends of truth in other lands, the following narrative of covenant-renovation is presented to the religious public.

For the benefit of some who are imperfectly acquainted with the doctrine of covenanting as a scriptural ordinance, and of descending covenant-obligation, as well as that those who recognize the duty may be prepared to give a reason of the hope that is in them with meekness and fear, it appears desirable that a concise view should be first given of the NATURE OF COVENANTING, of the doctrine of descending covenant-obligation, and of the history, contents, and objects of Britain's federal deeds—the Covenants, National and Solemn League. We shall thus be the better prepared to judge of the seasonableness and importance of the recent act of covenant-renovation, and to appreciate the reasons that serve to render such a duty at the present time especially valuable and advantageous.

CHAPTER I.

CONDENSED VIEW OF THE NATURE OF COVENANTING, AND OF THE DOCTRINE OF DESCENDING FEDERAL OBLIGATION.

THE duty of solemn vowing or covenanting, in certain circumstances, and for important ends, will not be denied by any who admit the supreme authority of the Word of God. Indeed, so consonant is the practice to right reason, that men adopt it in the various transactions of human life. Mutual compacts or covenants have been justly said to be "the ligaments of society." Without such stipulations, and a sense of their continued obligation upon the parties that enter into them, and others that they represent, the affairs of life could not be conducted. All confidence in promises and engagements would be at an end, and society would become utterly disunited and disorganized.

A covenant is a mutual engagement between two parties, implying the performance of certain duties on the one hand, and the fulfilment of promises on the other. In religious covenants, God and his people are the parties. Although, in the latitude of language, a covenant and a vow are sometimes regarded as identical in meaning, there is a distinction between them, simple and easily understood. The latter is an engagement by *one party* only; and in the case of public vows, the persons vowing are severally witnesses of the vows of one another. In a covenant, there is an engagement between two parties. An oath is a solemn appeal to God, the Searcher of hearts, for the truth and sincerity of the person who makes it. In a religious vow, God is regarded as a Sovereign or Master; in an oath, as a Witness and Judge. A covenant engagement may be entered into, with or without the ratification of an oath, though it has been properly said to imply both a vow and an oath. Every genuine believer virtually covenants with God, in his acceptance of Christ, and in the whole work of practical godliness. He takes hold of the covenant of grace, professes his belief in the precious truths of the Scriptures, his depend-

ence upon the promise and grace of the Mediator, and his resolution to walk in the way of holy obedience. This is substantially a *personal covenant*, implied in every act of faith, and expressed more or less explicitly in all believing prayer. In the pregnant expression of Matthew Henry, "*A life of holiness is a life of renewed acts of self-dedication.*"

A social religious covenant is a joint-engagement of a society to perform unitedly certain duties in cordial dependence upon Divine promises. It is perfectly plain that there is the same warrant for vowing or covenanting in public as for personal covenanting. The covenanter does nothing in public but what in substance he has frequently done in the privacy of his closet. Even where the covenant is ratified with an oath, there is no greater solemnity in this, than in swearing in relation to other matters. The matter of the oath may be more or less important; but the appeal to God for the sincerity of the juror is the same, and admits of no degrees of solemnity. It is a strange inconsistency in those who are ready to confirm by oath their declarations about things civil or worldly, to object to the same mode of ratification, in religious promises or engagements. As true religion imports binding ourselves to God, we may naturally expect that a solemn ratification by oath should have a principal place in religious engagements. It is beyond doubt that such a solemnity is a frequent subject of injunction, prediction, and approved example in the Inspired Word. God's people are said to be characterized by *swearing by his name*. Ancient religious covenants, such as those of Asa and Nehemiah, were ratified by oath. The revival of the Church, and the future conversion of the nations, are represented as intimately connected with religious swearing. "And thou shalt swear, The Lord liveth, in judgment, and in righteousness; and the nations shall bless themselves in Him, and in Him shall they glory." ¹ The example of the "man after God's own heart" is exhibited for the imitation of the faithful in all ages, "I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments." ²

In illustration of the nature of covenanting, the following observations may be added:—

1. *All religious covenants are transactions between God and man, and are founded on the covenant of grace.* God has revealed Himself as the God of mercy, and in virtue of a covenant-transaction between the persons of the Trinity from

¹ Jeremiah iv. 2.

² Psalm cxix. 106.

eternity, as ready to enter into a league of friendship with sinners. In the "counsel of peace," He has condescended to become his people's God, and is prepared to sustain towards them all gracious blessed relations. The covenant of grace is in the hands of the Mediator, to be administered, and its blessings communicated, to all the heirs of salvation. Hence, in all the federal transactions into which God has called his people to enter, whether as individuals or communities, Christ Jesus, given as a "covenant for the people," is to be regarded as the immediate and high contracting party. He reveals the covenant, brings his people into the bond of it, takes their engagement to his service, purges away its impurity with his blood, and by his grace and strength enables them to walk in all holy obedience. The grand proposal and discovery of the everlasting covenant is in the gracious and all-comprehensive offer, "*I am thy God.*" When this is apprehended and accepted by faith, the individual or society willingly returns the pledge of devoted service, "*Lord, I am thine, O save me.*" He shall say. "It is my people; and they shall say, The Lord is my God."¹

It was the Mediator of the new covenant that appeared to Abraham on the plains of Mamre; and as He manifested to Him his special favour, took from him a virtual engagement to all devoted obedience, "I am the Almighty God, walk before me, and be thou perfect." "I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee."² The same glorious personage appeared on Mount Sinai, and took Israel into a national covenant with Himself. "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure to me above all people: and all the people answered and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do."³ Here, then, are evidently two parties, and a joint-engagement, with mutual stipulations—the one, the blessed Mediator, appearing in majesty, and yet in wonderful mercy and condescension; the other, a people, selected from the nations, to be depositaries of Divine truth, and to be incorporated into a holy nation and a kingdom of priests. A fundamental view of all religious covenants is, that they are based on that covenant which is "ordered in all things and sure," and that they are in the hand of the Redeemer to prescribe all the matter of the engagement, to accept his people's dedication, and Himself to strengthen them for all right performance of duty. It is this view which exhibits covenanting not only as a solemn duty, but, at the

¹ Zech. xiii. 9. ² Genesis xvii. 7. ³ Exodus xix. 6-8; Deut. xxvi. 17-19.

same time, as a very high and ennobling privilege. Those who engage in the covenant must be *voluntary* in the surrender and dedication. It is not, however, optional whether they observe the duty or neglect it. In the day of power they become a "*willing people.*" They yield themselves to the Lord; and drawn by "cords of love, and bands of a man," they vow with the whole heart. The covenant thus entered into is frequently in Scripture styled, by way of emphasis, *The Lord's*. "He hath remembered his covenant." "Ye shall keep my covenant." This designation is not used, as if approved covenants, personal or social, were merely of the nature of a law, emanating from the will of a superior, and requiring obedience; but because God's glory is eminently displayed in the federal engagements of his people, and because Divine power and faithfulness are conspicuously seen in everything connected with the performance.

2. *A covenant with God may embrace various relations of human life, and a variety of matter, and yet it is throughout to be regarded as religious and peculiarly solemn.* Covenanting is throughout an act of Divine worship, involving a direct appeal to God, and a recognition of his gracious presence. The glorious Being with whom we covenant is the infinitely holy and omniscient Jehovah. The duties which we engage to perform are weighty and important; and the consequences of obedience or neglect are awfully momentous. As individuals, Christians have the warrant to "take hold" of God's covenant, and to yield themselves to the Lord. Not less incumbent is it upon communities, civil or ecclesiastical, to devote themselves to God, and to engage unitedly to serve Him. Society may be regarded as a *moral agent*, and as under law to God, the proper subject of moral responsibility, liable to punishment for disobedience and rebellion, and the recipient of rewards in the way of holy obedience. Approved covenants mentioned in Scripture are represented as made with persons in different relations, civil, ecclesiastical, and domestic, as in the instances of covenanting on the plains of Moab, in the last days of Moses, and at Shechem, in the concluding period of the life of Joshua.¹ Many of the ancient religious covenants were strictly *national*, as at Horeb, in the days of Asa, Hezekiah, Jehoiada, and Josiah. Corporate bodies are said, at periods yet future, to confederate together, and join themselves to the Lord, some in a church capacity, and some in other relations.² There is

¹ Deuteronomy xxix. ; Joshua xxiv.

² Isaiah xix. 18 ; Jeremiah l. 5 ; Zechariah viii. 23 ; Isaiah lvi.

express Divine approval of covenanting in all these conditions and relations.

The same covenant may embrace engagements which respect different relations in life, and may comprehend diversified duties. The persons entering into it occupy different stations, as members of the family—subjects of the commonwealth, and in the fellowship of the Church. Whatever God's law requires them to do in these relations, they may bind themselves in covenant to perform. In all relations, the Christian is bound to act as being under law to God, and with a supreme regard to his glory. Things sacred and civil are intimately and inseparably connected. The state of civil society deeply affects the interests of the Church; while the spiritual welfare of the family and the Church promote the prosperity and blessing of the whole community. It is, therefore, no valid objection to our fathers' covenants that they were of a *mixed nature*, partly civil and partly ecclesiastical. The ancient covenants mentioned in Scripture were of the same character. In the one case and the other, the glory of God was the great end which the covenanters had in view. To the advancement of this, all that befell them in Providence, all their relations and influence, were subordinated. This stamped with a religious character all that they did or engaged to do. The Divine injunction, "Fear God—honour the King,"¹ bringing into immediate juxtaposition duties civil and strictly religious, constitutes a full warrant to embrace in the same religious covenant matters of different kinds—even whatever the law of God enjoins.

3. Religious covenanting is strictly *moral in its nature*, and *most needful for the welfare of the Church*, and it is therefore *a duty always obligatory*. Vowing or covenanting is a duty founded on the law of nature, springing from the moral relations which necessarily subsist between God and his rational creatures. The practice can with no propriety be said to be a Jewish peculiarity, as it has nothing in it ceremonial or judicial. It belongs to those ordinances which are enjoined by the moral law, which proclaim God's supreme authority, and man's entire dependence and moral responsibility. Hence it is a duty proper to every dispensation of revealed religion. Covenanting was practised with Divine approval before the commencement of the Jewish economy, as in the cases of God's covenanting with Noah and Abraham, and of Jacob's vow at Bethel. Nay, even the law of nature dictates

¹ 1 Peter ii. 17.

vowing as a suitable part of religious worship. The heathen mariners with whom Jonah sailed, "offered a sacrifice to the Lord, and made vows;" and Pagan moralists and historians bear testimony that such a service was acceptable to the gods, and was frequently practised.

Moreover, public vows are needful to the existence, unity, and fellowship of the Church. Organized religious society supposes a confession of faith in Christ, and obedience to Him; and this is equivalent to a solemn religious engagement. Christians are one in their relation to Christ the Head; and this relation becomes visible by an open and full profession. Such a profession—as it was made in primitive times—was in the form of a solemn and explicit vow. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Communion in the Church, whether with God or one another, implies a joint-dedication of the members to God, and giving themselves to one another for the performance of all religious duties.¹ Covenanting itself is the most affecting expression of communion with God, and of the fellowship of saints. Engaging in it, we have near intercourse with God, as our Father and portion, and devote ourselves to Him; while, at the same time, by mutual pledges and vows, we animate and encourage one another in all holy obedience. All acts of public or social worship imply solemn vowing. In public prayer we present to God not only the desires of the heart, but also joint resolutions. United praise expresses oneness of mind and affections joyfully declared. An assembly of faithful worshippers is virtually a covenanting assembly. Cordially devoting themselves to God's service is essential to all spiritual worship. They in reality do nothing aright in acts of worship, if they do not present themselves a living sacrifice. Besides, the duties which the members of the Church, and the separate branches of the Church, owe to one another and to the world, can only be adequately performed in the way of public vowing. The open avowal and propagation of the truth—the advancement of Christ's cause—the purity and prosperity of the Church—and devoted efforts for the conversion of the world—require the Spirit of love to be in vigorous exercise, and demand self-denial and persevering exertion. Vows to God and to one another inspire mutual confidence, and prompt to holy, sustained action. The truth is best held and advanced by those who feel that they are "standing before the God of the whole

¹ See Dr Owen *On the True Nature of a Gospel Church*.

earth," and who can appeal to Him for their sincerity in professing and maintaining it. When the Lord shall build up Zion, and appear to men in his glory, nations and their rulers assemble *with one accord* to serve God supreme.

4. The duty of covenanting is *expressly and frequently enjoined by God himself*. The first precept of the moral law requires an acknowledgment of God as our God, in public and private; and this is equivalent to solemn vowing. All the other commandments of the Decalogue may be shown to imply the same great duty. We are explicitly commanded, "Vow, and pay to the Lord God;" and this is equally enjoined upon communities and individuals.¹ In the future conversion of the nations, covenanting is represented as being brightly exemplified. Israel and Judah thus became confederate in God's service.² And in connection with solemn religious vowing, Israel, Egypt, and Assyria are united in a holy profession of the truth, and enjoy special tokens of Divine favour and blessing.³

5. Religious covenanting *has been exemplified by the faithful in all ages, and by the Church of God in the best periods of her history*. Instead of being *sectarian* in its character, there is no other duty which has been regarded by God's servants as of higher obligation, or from the performance of which greater benefits have been expected. The Church has always been a *covenant-society*; and God's faithful servants have ever esteemed it their highest privilege, by sacred engagements, to avouch the Lord to be their God, and to declare their devotion to his service. Noah, the second father of the human family, immediately after the flood, built an altar, and offered sacrifice; and God gave him the token of his covenant, and swore that there would be no future universal deluge. The covenant with Abraham was renewed to Isaac and Jacob, and is represented by the Apostle Paul, as the perpetual charter of the visible Church,⁴ and that which the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, could not disannul. The Church's covenant is substantially the same in all ages—varying only in circumstances, and conditions of special privilege, duty, or trial. It embraces the profession of all truth revealed—obedience to all Divine precepts—faith in the promises—the observance of all Divine ordinances pure and entire,—and the advancement of God's glory throughout the earth. This was the nature of the National Covenant with Israel at Horeb; and the same was the

¹ Psalm lxxvi. 11; Deut. x. 20-22; Jer. iv. 2.

² Jer. i. 5.

³ Isa. xix. 18-25.

⁴ Gal. iii. 14-18.

matter of all subsequent renewals recorded in the Old Testament Scriptures—as on the plains of Moab, and in the days of Joshua, Asa, Hezekiah, Josiah, and Nehemiah.

Though it is not requisite that the practice of covenanting should be enjoined in the New Testament—as being moral in its nature and expressly instituted—it remains in full force, without an explicit abrogation, which we nowhere find in the Scriptures; yet sacred predictions, referring to the new economy, declare the prevalence of solemn vowing amidst the enlarged privileges of the Church.¹ Our Lord gives the sanction of his high approval to vowing and swearing in covenant; ² and the apostles tender their engagement to adherence and devoted obedience to Him, in terms of a solemn vow—“Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.”³ The Christians at Rome are exhorted to “yield themselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and their members as instruments of righteousness unto God;” and again, to “present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is their reasonable service.”⁴

The primitive Christian Churches certainly practised covenanting, as they were identified with the Church of the former dispensation, distinguished for its federal engagements. The churches of Macedonia—the first planted in Europe—on the occasion of making an extraordinary collection for their poor brethren,—Jewish converts in Judea, “first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to one another by the will of God.”⁵ This is represented as the fruit of a plentiful effusion of the Spirit. The transaction was not the engagement in making a religious profession, or in sealing ordinances—for such an engagement the apostle naturally expected; but it was something peculiar and worthy of special remark and commendation. Viewed as an act of public vowing or covenanting, as it unquestionably was, it was eminently of Divine approval. It was performed “according to the will of God.” Impelled to it by the special influence of the Spirit, the covenanting of these early societies of Gentile converts was laid as the basis of spiritual communion with brethren at a distance, who were of a different stock, and who had indulged undue prejudices against them. It served to give a proper direction to the application of the offerings of Christian liberality. The Macedonian Churches dedicated themselves to the Lord, prior to the devotement of their sub-

¹ Isa. xix., xlix; Jer. i.

² Matt. v. 17.

³ John vi. 68.

⁴ Rom. vi. 13; xii. 1.

⁵ 2 Cor. viii. 5.

stance. In short, this beautiful example of covenant-dedication—memorable as being the first on record in the primitive European churches, and among the Gentile converts—exhibited the Church united in the same faith—love abounding—and our Lord's prayer fulfilled—Christians speaking the same things, “perfectly joined together in one heart and one mind.”

Similar instances of federal vowing were frequent and common in the primitive Churches. Early ecclesiastical history relates that a Christian profession was at first made by a public declaration of adherence to the fundamental articles of the Church's creed, and by an oath to remain steadfast in the faith. Heathen as well as Christian testimonies bear evidence of this practice. Pliny's celebrated letter to the Emperor Trajan¹ expressly states that the Christians residing in Proconsular Asia bound themselves by *solemn oath* to abstain from wickedness, and to practise the duties of godliness and morality. This was the usual practice in the assemblies for worship in the year 107—some ten or twelve years after the death of John, the last of the apostles. The early Christian fathers, in various places, bear clear testimony to the existence of the same practice. Thus Justin Martyr, in his second apology, says—“Baptism (meaning the baptism of adult converts) was given only to those who, to the confession of their faith, added a vow to live according to their knowledge.”² Tertullian, speaking against theatrical representations, says—“These things belong to the pomp of the devils, against which we *swore* at the sealing of our creed.” Jerome expressly states that covenanting preceded the rite of baptism—“We enter into covenant with the Sun of Righteousness, and swear that we shall serve Him.”

The Churches of Christ that made an evangelical profession, both before and posterior to the Reformation, exemplified this great duty. The Waldenses not only emitted a confession of

¹ “They affirmed that the whole of their fault or error lay in this—that they were wont to meet together on a stated day before it was light, and sing among themselves alternately a hymn to Christ, as to God, and *bind themselves by an oath*, not to the commission of any wickedness, but not to be guilty of theft, or robbery, or adultery; never to falsify their word, nor to deny a pledge committed to them when called upon to return it. When those things were performed, it was their custom to separate, and then to come together again to a meal, which they ate in common without any disorder; but this they had forborne since the publication of my edict, by which, according to your command, I prohibited assemblies.”—Melmoth's *Pliny's Letters*; Waddington's *History of the Church*, p. 10.

² Written about A. D. 160.

faith, but in the year 1552, when subjected to cruel persecution, they renewed their testimony, and ratified it by solemn oath. And in 1603, they made still more public their confession, addressing it to all Protestant churches and states, and engaging before the world to live in the doctrine of the Scriptures, despite of all loss and suffering. Who can doubt that this covenant was an eminent means of preserving these noble witnesses from being devoured by the Romish Beast, and of transmitting their testimony and heroic achievements to future generations? At the memorable period of the Reformation and afterwards, public covenanting was extensively resorted to, not only for defence and protection, but also as an approved way of securing and transmitting precious truth. The famous League at Smalcald bound the Protestant princes together, and was to them a tower of strength against the antichristian oppressor. The senate and people of Geneva covenanted; and the safety of this small state, surrounded as it was by numerous combined and inveterate foes, was owing not less to the purity of its faith than to the blessing of Heaven upon its federal engagement. The Reformed Churches in Hungary and Transylvania, in Holland and France, all exemplified this scriptural and primitive practice; and the spread of scriptural truth in these countries, and the preservation of the Church amidst the machinations and oppression of the papacy, was the fruit of solemn dedication. The "Pilgrim Fathers," who laid the foundation of an extensive church and of an "empire of freedom" in the Western World, before they landed and entered upon their noble enterprise, engaged in a solemn covenant. This deed, which was several times afterwards renewed, may be regarded as the germ of liberty and greatness, as well as the guarantee for the inheritance of scriptural truth, to their descendants. The distinction of the British churches and nation, arising from their public religious covenants, will be hereafter noticed.

From this hasty sketch, are we not warranted to conclude that the practice of covenanting has the clearest and fullest Divine warrant; that, instead of being sectarian or limited in its observance, it has been practised in past ages by all faithful servants of God; and that it has ever characterized the purest churches in their best times, and in periods of special trial and suffering? The most precious benefits, besides, have resulted from the observance of this ordinance. It has been not less an act of religious worship and holy obedience, than a high and

honourable privilege, the fruit of peculiar Divine favour. The neglect of this ordinance characterizes individuals and churches as having forsaken the footsteps of the flock, and indicates decay and declension. Return to it, on the other hand, and the proper exemplification of scriptural covenanting not only identify us with the Church of patriarchs, prophets, and apostles, but they will, moreover, be a valuable means of revival. Thus are lands "married to the Lord," and the Church "puts on her beautiful garments," and appears "clear as the sun, fair as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners."

CHAPTER II.

THE DOCTRINE OF COVENANT-OBLIGATION.

THAT religious covenants have a moral obligation not only upon those who enter into them, but likewise upon those who are represented by them, is susceptible of manifold and most satisfactory proof. The law of nature, the reiterated declarations of Holy Scripture, and the practice and universal consent of society, fully establish this doctrine.

A brief statement of the doctrine of federal obligation, and a condensed outline of the argument in support of it, may suffice to present this subject to the reader.

First of all, the grand and fundamental ground of the obligation of a religious covenant is the *Moral Law*. The law of God alone can bind the conscience. No oath or bond is of any force that is opposed to it. To keep an engagement to do what the Divine law forbids, or to neglect what it requires, renders a person doubly guilty, and is adding sin to sin. The obligation of the law of God is primary, and cannot be increased; that of a voluntary oath or engagement is only secondary or subordinate. By the Divine law we are obliged to the performance of duty whether we choose it or not; by covenants we voluntarily bind ourselves. Both the light of nature, and the precepts and approved examples of Scripture, as we have shown, warrant the practice of covenanting; and where the vows made respect duties enjoined by the law of God, they have an intrinsic obligation of the highest and most constraining kind. The precepts, examples, and predictions of Scripture exhibit in the clearest manner the moral obligation of this great duty; and as these are presented, both before the introduction of the Jewish economy, and refer to the times that are subsequent to its abrogation, it is evident that this obligation is not restricted to the Jewish people; but that, like the moral law itself, it respects the whole family of mankind—it is universal and perpetual.

2. But, moreover, religious covenants have an obligation

distinct and peculiar. Although the authority of God, expressed in his law and speaking through his Word is supreme, and cannot possibly be increased, there may be a *superadded* obligation on a man's conscience to respect and obey this authority, arising from his own voluntary oath or engagement. This is easily illustrated. We are bound at all times to speak the truth, and to fulfil our promises and federal engagements. If an oath is taken to declare the truth, this adds nothing, it is true, to the authority of the law; but it brings the person swearing under an additional obligation to speak the truth. This does not increase the original obligation; and yet it may be properly regarded as a new and different obligation. An oath is enjoined by Divine authority, and cannot therefore be useless. When properly taken, it is important and valuable. Before the oath was taken, if the person deviated from the truth, he was simply guilty of lying; but afterward, if he speaks falsely, he has added to his sin the crime of perjury. In the former case, he rebelled against the authority of God; in the latter, he both violates the authority of God, and repugns the obligation of his oath. The usages of all civilized society confirm the doctrine of superadded obligation, arising from oaths and voluntary engagements, and regard perjured persons and covenant-breakers as aggravated criminals. It has been justly observed, that a "covenant does not bind to anything additional to what the law of God contains, but it *additionally* binds."¹ This superadded obligation of vows, oaths, and covenants is plainly recognized in the Scriptures.² Divine threatenings distinctly specify, as a separate ground of punishment, breach of covenant, in addition to the transgression of God's law.³

3. Public religious 'covenants have a *descending obligation upon posterity represented in them.* They not only bind the original covenanters, but likewise those whom they represented, till the objects for which they were framed are accomplished. The representative principle runs extensively through all social transactions, and is recognized in every part of the scheme of Divine revelation. Parents represent and engage for their children, not only in certain ordinances of religion, but also in various social transactions. In civil society, men

¹ *Nature and Obligation of Public Vowing*, by William Symington, D.D., p. 22.

² Numbers xxx. 2; Deut. xxiii. 21; Eccles. v. 4, 5.

³ Deut. xxxi. 20, 21.

bind their heirs and executors, as well as themselves; and commercial contracts and international compacts are universally admitted to be obligatory upon the descendants of those who framed them, or who first entered into them. To repudiate such an obligation is regarded by all as aggravated unfaithfulness, and as dissolving the bonds of society.

The principle of continued federal obligation is grounded upon an essential characteristic of organized society. This is its *permanent identity*, so that the obligation is not so much *descending*, as resting upon the same body in different stages of its existence. Society is regarded as morally one, during the whole course of its existence, whatever changes may take place in its individual members. It is a *moral agent*, under law to God,—the proper subject of reward or punishment. Having thus a permanent character or moral identity, the obligation is continued, so that the society is bound to implement the unfulfilled engagements of the same community in a preceding period. Covenants that are moral in their nature are thus of *perpetual* obligation. Posterity are properly included in them; and, in fulfilling federal engagements, it is not so much one class of persons discharging the obligations come under by another, as society, represented by different members, performing its own permanent obligations.

The Scriptures plainly and most fully declare this moral identity of society, and recognize it in recounting God's dealings with communities, civil and ecclesiastical. The principle is, indeed, essential to the scheme of the Divine government. It is a constitution expressly appointed by God himself. On this ground, Levi is said to have "paid tithes in Abraham," being yet in the loins of his father when Melchizedec met him. The ancient federal transactions of God's people embraced in them posterity.¹ The violation of engagements entered into by society many generations before, is rightly charged as a sin upon the same body in subsequent ages. Thus the land of Israel is smitten with famine in the days of David, and the cause is expressly said to be the breach of covenant made in the days of Joshua, *four hundred years before*, with the Gibeonites.² The prophet Jeremiah directly charges upon the Jewish nation in his days the sin of breaking the covenant made with their fathers, and assigns this as the grand cause of the desolation coming upon the land from the Chaldean invasion.³ This could only be done on the ground that the

¹ Deut. v. 2; xxix. 14, 15.

² 2 Sam. xxi.

³ Jer. xi. 10.

national society was the same. Thus, too, in Hosea, twelfth chapter, in God's covenanting with Jacob at Bethel, "the angel" is said to speak with Israel in the prophet's days. And in psalm sixty-sixth, the Church existing hundreds of years afterwards is said to rejoice, as if personally present in the deliverance at the Red Sea. The moral identity of communities is evinced by the dispensation of retributive rewards and punishments, in different stages of their existence. As the personal identity of individuals is clearly seen in the rewards of obedience afterwards reaped, and in the punishments inflicted at one period of life for sins committed at another; so it is, too, in organized society. In the second commandment, "the iniquity of fathers" is said to be visited on their children to the third and fourth generations, while mercy is shown to "thousands of them that love God and keep his commandments." "The punishment inflicted on one unhappy generation is the penalty, with interest, of the guilt that had been accumulating during all former generations; and this proves that it was one moral agent during the whole period."¹ On this ground of the moral identity of communities, and of continued obligation of covenants, the Jewish people, in the era of the Babylonish captivity, are represented as the same society that came out of Egypt; the Amorites, that were extirpated in the wars of Joshua, were punished for crimes that had been accumulating from the infancy of their national existence; and in accordance with our Lord's denunciation, the vengeance executed in the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, was the award of sins that were committed throughout succeeding ages, from the earliest period.² Thus, too, the two Apocalyptic witnesses and Antichrist have a continued identity through the prophetic period of 1260 years. The doom threatened in inspired prophecy, and executed upon ancient nations, as Amalek, Egypt, Babylon, Idumea, Moab, Ammon, and Tyre, goes on the principle of their moral identity. For crimes increasing from generation to generation are they ultimately punished and destroyed. The children walk in the steps of their fathers. "Fathers eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." Nations are under law to God. His eyes behold them; and when the measure of their wickedness is full, they become victims of Divine vengeance.

This principle is continually receiving fresh and vivid illus-

¹ *Life of Alexander the Great*, in *Family Library*, quoted by White.

² Matthew xxiii. 35.

trations in the administration of God's moral government. Modern nations, such as Spain and France, that persecuted Christ's servants, and shed the blood of the saints, have become degraded, or are tossed with revolutions, without hope of recovery or rest. The house of Bourbon, since the days of the perfidious slaughter of the Huguenots, has never sat upon a secure throne, and is now rejected and cast off as abhorred of the nation. The Jewish people, since the days of our Saviour, have been suffering for sins committed during previous ages, and generation after generation have lain under the fearful malediction which their fathers invoked in shedding the Redeemer's blood.¹ Their miraculous preservation and their outcast condition shows, on the one hand, that they are still visited for the iniquities of their fathers, and yet intimate that God's designs of mercy are to be accomplished in the national salvation of Israel. The moral identity of the antichristian system is expressly proclaimed in the infliction of the last plagues which are sent for its destruction. The vengeance that overwhelms mystical Babylon is declared to be the vindication of God's moral government toward her, during the whole course of her existence. "Her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities."² It is retribution the more fearful as it has long been delayed. "Reward her even as she rewarded you, and double unto her double according to her works; in the cup which she hath filled fill to her double." And it is particularly said to be the avenging of the blood of slaughtered saints.³

The principle of continued or transmissible federal obligation is not liable to the objections that have been urged against it, and is no novelty. We do not make our ancestors a sort of federal heads, as Adam was to the human family, when we allege that posterity are bound by their engagements. This is altogether a misrepresentation of the argument on the subject. The descending obligation of public covenants rests upon the essential character of organized society. It is the same party in different stages of its existence that is bound to moral obedience; and the obligation rests in all its plenitude upon the community as the same moral agent, until the whole matter of the engagement is fulfilled. This principle has been recognized in every age, in things civil as well as ecclesiastical, and may be said to enter as a fundamental element into the laws and usages

¹ "His blood be upon us, and on our children."

² Revelation xviii. 5.

³ Rev. xviii. 20; xix. 1, 2.

of society, as well as into matters purely religious, and the affairs of the Church. Compacts, promises, and oaths are universally regarded as binding not only upon those who make them, but likewise upon those whom they lawfully represent, until the object for which they were brought in is attained. Hence covenants of a moral nature continue obligatory long after the original framers have ceased to exist. In public religious vows, God being the one party and the Church or the nation the other, these parties have a continued existence; and notwithstanding the changes that take place in the constituent members of the one party, the obligation is perpetual, inasmuch as the identity of the corporate bodies remains unaltered.

The continued obligation of public religious covenants is highly *beneficial* in its tendency and effects, and supplies some of the most constraining motives to the performance of solemn and important duties. Believing in this doctrine, faithful men cherish the joyful expectation that *posterity will be secured in the possession of covenant-blessings* as well as themselves; and, on the other hand, *posterity are excited and encouraged to confide in the God of their fathers*. The sense of gratitude, one of the most powerful stimulants to obedience, is strengthened, while children reflect on the Divine goodness that consulted for their welfare, by embracing them in the same covenant with their ancestors. Thus in the days of primitive Christianity, Peter reminds the Jews—"Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers."¹ On the same principle believers, with holy boldness, address God in prayer as their fathers' God, and plead, "The Lord our God be with us, as He was with our fathers: let Him not leave us, nor forsake us."²

Again. It inspires an *assured confidence and a joyful hope*. God who condescended to take his people into covenant, is their "dwelling-place in all generations;" and His "mercy is on them that fear Him, from generation to generation." There is all ground to hope that He who has been gracious to the fathers in time past will be gracious still to their children. Thus the Jewish lawgiver encouraged the people in the way of holy obedience—"The Lord thy God is a merciful God; He will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers, which He sware unto them."³ On the other hand, the sense of continued federal obligation speaks *solemn warning*, and furnishes a *powerful motive to deter from all*

¹ Acts li. 25.² 1 Kings viii. 57.³ Deut. iv. 31.

apostasy and disobedience. Covenant-violation is ever represented as an aggravated sin, exposing those who commit it to the severest calamities.¹

Furthermore, we have here a *powerful and prevailing argument* in prayer. The believer, in the spirit of adoption, pleads, "I am thine, save me."² The Church, in trial and distress, prays, "We are thine: thou never bearest rule over them; they were not called by thy name."³ And again, "Behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people."⁴ Faithful servants of God, like Jeremiah, earnestly supplicate, "Do not abhor us, for thy name's sake, do not disgrace the throne of thy glory: remember, break not thy covenant with us;"⁵ and plead for the conversion of the nations, "Have respect unto thy covenant: for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty."⁶ Confidence in prayer is inspired, from the consideration that the covenant is a shield for protection and defence of a covenant people in future generations. Thus Israel, even after much wandering and backsliding, is assured—"And yet for all that, when they may be in the land of their enemies, I will not cast them away, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them: for I am the Lord their God. But I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the heathen, that I might be their God."⁷

The remarkable favour shown to Britain, amidst the conflicts and convulsions of European nations, has been well traced to God's special regard to a land once married to Him in covenant. "It was not the ocean which surrounds us; it was not the number and prowess of our fleets and armies, nor the wisdom of our councils, but the sword of the Lord, and the buckler of his favour, that saved us."⁸ Thus, moreover, *the remembrance of the wonderful things that God has done for his people is vividly preserved and transmitted to future generations.* As a primary duty, parents are enjoined to make known to their children God's mighty works; and this is declared to be a principal part of approved thanksgiving.⁹

Finally. *Federal transmissible obligation eminently displays and promotes the unity of the Church,* and begets a delightful mutual interest between fathers and children. The Church is thus

¹ Levit. xxvi. 25; Deut. xxix. 25; Jer. xi. 1-3.

² Psa. cxix. 94.

³ Isa. lxiii. 19.

⁴ Isa. lxiv. 9.

⁵ Jer. xiv. 21.

⁹ Psa. lxxviii. 4; cxi. 5; 1 Chron. xvi. 12.

⁶ Psa. lxxiv. 20.

⁷ Lev. xxvi. 44, 45.

⁸ Paxton.

seen to be one in all ages, enjoying the same high covenant privileges, engaged in the same great work, and performing the same duties, and cherishing the same lofty hopes and expectations. Fathers representing their children in covenant, and children recognizing the federal deeds of their ancestors, regard each other with the deepest and most cordial interest. The present generation looks back to the past, as the past anticipates the future. The servants of God feel that they are connected by the tenderest ties with them that have gone before ; and they learn too to live for posterity. Thus an eminent public spirit is engendered and strengthened. Distant periods are brought together, and the best interests of different generations and races promoted ; while the Redeemer's glory in gathering into one in Himself a ransomed Church from all nations and ages is eminently advanced.

CHAPTER III.

THE BRITISH COVENANTS : THEIR HISTORY—CONTENTS—USES.

FROM the examples of public social covenanting which have been already adduced, we have seen that the scriptural practice of covenanting characterized the Churches of the Reformation in various lands. In none, however, was it so fully adopted as in the British nation, and especially in Scotland. There the Reformation attained its brightest development, so that Scotland was at one time justly styled—"Philadelphia among the nations." Through the singular favour of the Mediator, the Scottish reformers were led early to confederate together, and to bind themselves by sacred engagements to advance the Divine glory, in promoting true religion. Every succeeding step of reformation was secured and consolidated by renewed federal vows. Thus were our faithful ancestors cemented in godly union, and inspired with strength of purpose and holy energy; and valuable attainments were transmitted to posterity. The Reformation in North Britain has the peculiar distinction of being, in every progressive stage, the *Covenanted Reformation*; and the Church and nation had the high honour of being, in the fullest sense of the terms, "*a covenanted church and land.*"

Among the first of the federal deeds of our Scottish forefathers was a brief engagement entered into a few years after the martyrdom of the youthful Patrick Hamilton, by a few gentlemen who met in Mid-Lothian, and pledged their property, reputation, and life, for the preservation of "Christ's blessed Evangel." This was the germ of the future precious liberties, civil and religious, which, after many a hard struggle, were won for their native country. Some years afterwards, when the adherents of the Reformation had considerably increased, a number of solemn engagements for the maintenance of true religion, and for mutual assistance and co-operation, were framed and taken. The first of these was framed in 1556, and subscribed by the friends of the Reformation in Mearns. Similar sacred bonds, adapted to the

varying circumstances of the reformed, were entered into at Edinburgh in 1557,¹ at Perth in 1559, and at Ayr in 1562. These covenants, though voluntarily and joyfully taken by some of the most distinguished men in the nation, and by persons of different classes, were not enjoined by the supreme authority either of the nation or of the Church, and were properly private social deeds; though they proved of singular benefit, in resisting the machinations of Antichrist, and in promoting evangelical truth and purity of worship.

The vigorous and violent attempts of the enemies of truth to crush the Reformation in various countries, taught the Protestants in Scotland the importance of closer union and more decisive action, in order to preserve their dearly-acquired liberties, and to transmit to posterity the blessings of pure and undefiled religion. The success of Jesuit policy in arresting the progress of the Reformation on the continent, the Bartholomew massacre in France,² which was solemnly celebrated at Rome as the destruction of Protestantism in that country, and the existence of a League among the Roman Catholic princes and the pope to exterminate the reformed faith, served to reveal to faithful men their danger, and to convince them that it was only by a death-struggle that their privileges and very existence, as witnesses for truth, could be maintained. Every means that the man of sin could devise was put in requisition to extirpate evangelical doctrine from Scotland, and to bring back the nation to the bondage of Rome. The pope was even found to have granted *dispensations* to some of his most devoted servants to profess the reformed religion, for the purpose of undermining and subverting it.

On the accession of James VI. those dangers were greatly increased. The boyish age of the monarch—his subjection to the guidance of unprincipled favourites—the report that the pope had himself written several letters to the king—and the arrival in Scotland of numbers of Jesuits and seminary priests, with the interception of several letters of dispensation from Rome,—excited a just and well-grounded alarm throughout the nation, that a deep-laid plot was hatching to destroy the reformed faith, and to crush the liberties of Scotland. At this crisis James, either to remove suspicion from himself and his favourite, or to restore public confidence, requested John

¹ See Appendix.

² The Bartholomew massacre was celebrated at Rome by a solemn *Tz Drum*, by the order of the Pope; and a medal was struck, with the engraving "Strages Hugonotorum"—the Slaughter of the Huguenots.

Craig, one of the ministers of Edinburgh, and his chaplain, to draw up a short confession of the reformed faith, and a solemn covenant—which might be publicly taken, as a bond and vow, pledging the nation to determined resistance to the wicked designs of the enemy. This remarkable document was styled “THE SCOTS’ CONFSSION,” and was the NATIONAL COVENANT OF SCOTLAND in its original form. It contains a full and very explicit abjuration of the corruptions of Popery, both in doctrine and in its superstitious and idolatrous rites, and it disclaimed especially the pope’s usurped authority and his wicked hierarchy. It was, at the same time, a solemn bond of adherence to the doctrine and discipline of the Reformed Church, under promise and oath, “to defend his Majesty’s person and authority, with their goods, bodies, and lives, in defence of Christ’s Evangel, liberties of our country, ministration of justice, and punishment of iniquity, against all enemies, within the realm or without.” This bond was sworn by the king and his household, on the 20th of January 1581; and soon afterwards, in consequence of an order of the Privy Council and an act of the General Assembly, it was taken by persons of all ranks throughout the kingdom. The happy effects of these vigorous measures was to dissipate fear, restore public confidence, and bind the nation in the most solemn manner in firm attachment to the principles of the Reformation. The schemes of enemies were frustrated, the Church was inspired with renewed courage, and the state, as if drawing from the solemn transaction a higher idea of its proper functions as an institution of God for the promotion of his glory, towards the end of the same year ratified all the former acts in favour of the true religion then professed. Besides its sacred character and object as a religious bond, the National Covenant must ever be regarded as the grand bulwark of Scottish liberty and independence. “To this much vilified bond,” says a candid historian, “every Scotchman ought to look with as great reverence as Englishmen do to the Magna Charta. It was what saved the country from absolute despotism, and to it we may trace back the origin of all the successful efforts made by the inhabitants of Britain, in defence of their succeeding freedom, during the reigns of the Stuarts.”¹

The National Covenant was renewed in 1590, on the occasion of the deliverance of the country from a threatened Spanish invasion, which was set on foot by the popish powers to destroy

¹ Aikman’s *History of Scotland*, vol iii. p. 445.

the liberties of Britain. At this period, the General Bond was appended to the Covenant ; and by order of the council, a commission, to be assisted by *one hundred and thirty* of the nobility and gentry, was given to *ninety-six* ministers, to convene the godly and well-affected of all ranks throughout the kingdom to administer the Covenant and receive signatures. Copies of the original covenant, with the general bond, were printed and circulated throughout the kingdom, and were cheerfully and generally subscribed.

In the year 1596, another renovation of the national covenant took place, and proved a signal means of revival to the Church and nation. This originated in the General Assembly, on the motion of the venerable John Davidson, minister of Prestonpans. After a solemn public confession of sin, the ministers and elders present, to the number of *four hundred*, with uplifted hands, renewed their covenant with God, "protesting to walk more warily in their ways, and to be more diligent in their charges." "There have been many days," says Calderwood, "of humiliation for present judgments and imminent dangers, but the like for sin and defection was never seen since the Reformation."¹ The Assembly took measures for engaging the nation generally in the same solemn work. Many of the Synods and Presbyteries, after special preparation, took the covenant, with evident tokens of the Divine presence. In the Synod of Fife, particularly, on the occasion of covenant-renovation, there were manifold tokens of the gracious and powerful presence of the Spirit. Although soon after severe and long-continued trials befell the Church of Scotland, there can be no doubt that this memorable instance of covenanting served important purposes, in the sovereign designs of Zion's King towards his people. It prevented defection—united the faithful more firmly in the bond of a common brotherhood—prepared the Church for sifting temptations and trials—and rendered it more difficult for enemies to wrest from her her dearly-bought privileges. The remembrance of the covenant of their God sustained his servants during the long night of their oppression ; and at the darkest hour served to animate them with the joyful hope that the Lord would yet visit the land, and bring back to it his departed glory. The national covenant was not renewed again, except by the Presbytery of St Andrews and the Synod of Lothian, till the year 1638, at the morning-break of the Second Reformation.

¹ Calderwood's *History of Church of Scotland*, vol. v. p. 407; Melville's *Diary*, pp. 222, 223.

The attempts made by James VI., in the latter part of his reign, and persevered in by his son and successor Charles I., to force Prelacy upon the nation of Scotland, led to the renovation of the covenant in 1638, and to the introduction of the Second Reformation. The long oppressions arising from the adoption of the *Perth Articles* were followed by yet greater hardships to the faithful; and the introduction of a *Book of Canons*, and a *Liturgy* for the Church of Scotland, was designed to complete the scheme of prelatic domination. By the Canons, the whole Presbyterian policy was at once set aside; and the Scottish Liturgy only differed from that of the Episcopal Church in England, by approaching more nearly in various particulars to the Romish Breviary. These changes were made solely by regal authority; and refusal to adopt them was to be visited by summary punishment.

When the spirit of the nation was roused to resist these innovations, and to assert their ancient rights, the happy proposal was adopted to renew the national covenant. After some preparatory measures were taken, it was agreed to make two additions to the original covenant, the one written by Archibald Johnston, afterwards Lord Warriston, in which numerous Acts of Parliament are adduced, to show that the proceedings of the covenanters were constitutional; and the other penned by Alexander Henderson, applying the principles of the covenant against the recent Prelatic innovations. The covenant, thus enlarged, assumed the form in which it is usually printed with the Westminster Confession. The covenant was sworn and subscribed on the 28th February 1638; and on that and the two following days, no fewer than 60,000 signatures were affixed to it. An old historian describes in suitable terms the conclusion of this eminent work of covenant-renovation:—
“With groans and tears streaming down their face, they all lifted up their hands at once. After the oath had been administered, the people were prayerfully enjoined to begin the work of personal reformation. At the conclusion everybody seemed to feel that a great measure of the Divine presence had accompanied the solemnities of the day; and with their hearts much comforted and strengthened for every duty, the enormous crowd retired about nine o’clock.” Copies of the covenant were afterwards sent to all parts of the kingdom; and it was everywhere taken with the utmost cordiality. “The matter was so holy,” said the Earl of Rothes, “that they held it to be irreligious to use wicked means for advancing so good a work.”

This remarkable instance of covenanting is justly characterized by Henderson and Dickson in their first reply to the doctors of Aberdeen—"This was the day of the Lord's power, in which multitudes offered themselves most willingly, like the dew-drops of the morning." And Livingstone, an eye-witness, bears testimony to the solemn impressions and happy effects of the taking of the covenant throughout the kingdom—"I was present at Lanark," says he, "and several other parishes, when on Sabbath, after the forenoon's sermon, the covenant was read and sworn; and I may truly say, that in all my lifetime, excepting at the kirk of Shotts, I never saw such motions from the Spirit of God. All the people generally and most willingly concurred. I have seen more than 1000 persons, all at once lifting up their hands, and the tears falling down from their eyes; so that, throughout the whole land, excepting the professed papists, and some few who adhered to the prelates, people universally entered into the covenant of God."

The covenant, as taken at this juncture, proved of eminent service to the cause of reformation. It united the nation in one invincible band, and rendered the attempts of enemies abortive. It led to other important steps of reformation, until the scriptural liberties of the nation were secured, and the lovely spectacle was exhibited of a reformed state in friendly conjunction with a Church distinguished for purity, without the one invading the legitimate province of the other. In the year 1639, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland enjoined the taking of the covenant ecclesiastically, and ordained that it should be engrossed in the records of the Church. The Parliament, in 1640, ratified the covenant, and converted it into a standing law of the kingdom, and a test of admission to office. It was placed on the records, with the other Acts of Parliament, and ordained to be publicly read at the opening of every Parliament before proceeding to business, and to be sworn by every member, upon pain of forfeiting his seat. All judges, magistrates, and other state officers, were required to swear and subscribe the covenant, before entering upon office. In the year 1649, the Scottish Estates enacted that the king should, as a part of his coronation oath, declare his approval of the Covenants, National and Solemn League, and his obligation in his high station to prosecute the ends thereof. Accordingly, Charles Second, at his coronation at Scone, swore and subscribed the covenant, though his life afterwards afforded sad evidence of his complicated perfidy.

It thus appears that the National Covenant is to be properly regarded as, in the fullest sense, the federal deed of the nation. It was embodied in the constitution, and became, in truth, an essential part of it. At the time in which it was taken, and afterwards, it was everywhere regarded as the Magna Charta of the civil and religious liberties of Scotland. It restrained the power of the sovereign within constitutional limits, and taught the people just views of their rights and liberties; and its grand excellence consisted in settling the whole on a scriptural foundation. The English patriots assumed it as the basis of the Solemn League and Covenant. It served to unite the hearts and concentrate the efforts of friends of liberty throughout the three kingdoms. It originated the admirable measures of the Long Parliament; and was, in truth, the groundwork of the Second Reformation, the influence of which will be yet felt in Britain, and in other lands, in the future revival and triumph of evangelical religion and genuine liberty.

An eminent French statesman and historian says of the Westminster Assembly, whose existence and measures may evidently be traced to the national covenant—"It founded the power of the Commons, and caused English society to take a wide step from the monstrous inequality of the feudal system."¹ It has been ably shown, too, that the expression of the principal parts of the American "DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE" was taken from the articles of the national covenant.² So that the two great nations in the world, where true religion and civil liberty are most flourishing, are indebted to the national covenant for all that constitutes the main elements of their greatness and prosperity. The taking of the covenant at the close of the Second Reformation was closely connected with the passing of the "Act of Classes," by which irreligious men and the enemies of the Reformation were excluded from places of power and trust in the nation,—the renewed approval of the *Second Book of Discipline* and the abolition of patronage. The aim of these measures was, according to the statement of an excellent historian, "The construction of what the world has never yet seen, a Christian Government, composed of men whose ruling principle should be to fear God and honour the King."³

The obligation of this venerable deed rests mainly upon its moral and scriptural principles, and is independent of the conduct of the covenanters. Although it is believed that the char-

¹ Galzet's *History of the English Revolution*.

³ Hetherington.

² Dr Smyth on *The Mecklenburg Declaration*.

acter and measures of the leading reformers in Scotland, at the memorable period of the Second Reformation, will advantageously compare with those of the patriots of any other age or country, we are not required to approve of everything, either in the one or the other, in maintaining that the covenant is of perpetual moral obligation. It was in full accordance with the precepts and examples of God's Word, and it cannot be shown to be intolerant and persecuting in its principles; nor can the conduct of those who employed it as an instrument for establishing and protecting the liberties, civil and religious, of the nation, be shown to be illegal and rebellious, without impeaching the wisdom and authority of God speaking in the oracles of truth, and without denying to a nation the right of throwing off the yoke of oppression, and securing for itself true rational liberty. Beyond any dispute, this covenant was in the highest sense *national*; and to it, in a great measure, the Scottish people owe their high distinction among the nations. In adopting it as the foundation of their dearest rights, and the bulwark of their liberties, they set an example to other countries which, we cannot doubt, will be yet extensively followed in the days when all lands shall bow down to the sceptre of Prince Messiah.

The Solemn League and Covenant.

The Solemn League and Covenant owes its origin to the earnest struggles of the spirit of religious freedom against error and arbitrary power. At a period of no ordinary peril to the cause of true religion, and to the liberties and civil rights of Britain, was it framed; and the impartial verdict of historians of very different views is, that to this admirable bond we owe the deliverance of the nation from imminent dangers, and that through it the blessings of civil and religious liberty have been transmitted as a precious inheritance to an ungrateful posterity.

In the civil war between Charles First and the English Parliament, in the early part of the year 1643, the king had generally been successful in his military operations, and the affairs of the Parliament had been reduced to a critical and dangerous position. Had the Scottish nation thrown its weight at this crisis into the royal cause, there can be little doubt that the monarch would have triumphed over the liberties of his English subjects, and accomplished his darling project of establishing arbitrary power and perpetuating Prelatic domina-

tion. At this eventful time, the Westminster Assembly had convened, at the call of the Long Parliament, to devise measures for a thorough reformation of religion, but at first they made little progress. Sensible of this, the divines petitioned both Houses of Parliament to appoint a day of public fasting and humiliation, that "every one might bitterly bewail his own sins, and cry mightily to God, for Christ's sake, to remove his wrath, and heal the land." And they entreat the rulers, moreover, "instantly to take into their most serious consideration how they may more speedily set up Christ more gloriously, in all his ordinances, within the kingdom, and reform all things amiss throughout the land, wherein God is more specially and more immediately dishonoured." The Westminster Assembly and the Long Parliament, actuated by such feelings, sent commissioners to the Scottish Parliament, and to the General Assembly then sitting,—the one to obtain the aid of the Scottish nation in conducting the war against the king, and the other to solicit assistance in prosecuting the work of reformation. In the letter from the Westminster Assembly, the following moving expressions occur:—"The kingdom of England is in a deplorable condition, on the edge of a most desperate precipice, ready to be swallowed up by Satan and his instruments. Great is the cruelty of their enemies against such as fall into their hands, being armed against them not only as men, but as Christians, as Protestants, and as reformers; and if they are given up to their rage, the safety of all Protestant Churches will be endangered." And they add, "In a deeper sense of this danger than we can express, we address you, in the bowels of Christ, for your most fervent prayers and advice, what farther to do for the making of our own and the kingdom's peace with God, and for the uniting of the Protestant party more firmly, that we may all serve God with one consent, and stand up against Antichrist as one man."¹

Alexander Henderson presided at this meeting of the General Assembly. The response to the application from the English Commissioners was the proposal that a mutual Bond should be drawn up, stating the grounds on which assistance should be rendered, and the two nations co-operate in the

¹ The delegates from the Parliament were Sir Harry Vane, Sir William Armour, and Messrs Hatcher and Darley; those of the Westminster Assembly were the Rev. Stephen Marshall, a Presbyterian, and Rev. Philip Nye, an Independent.

struggle for liberty.¹ The English Commissioners only contemplated a civil league, but as the entire contest in Scotland had been of a religious character, and had been conducted to a prosperous issue, principally by means of the national covenant, it was insisted by both the Convention of Estates and the General Assembly, that the proposed league should be of a religious nature. On the suggestion of Sir Harry Vane, the bond of union between the two kingdoms was framed, so as to embrace both ideas, and to be partly religious and partly civil. The preparation of the bond was entrusted to Alexander Henderson; and when, on the 17th of August, the draft of the Solemn League and Covenant was submitted to the General Assembly, it was adopted unanimously amidst the applause of some, and the bursting tears of joy of others. The covenant was then transmitted to the English Parliament and the Westminster Assembly; and being, with some slight alterations, approved by them, it was appointed to be taken on the 25th of September. On that memorable day, the members of the House of Commons, with the Assembly of Divines and the Scottish Commissioners, met in the Church of St Margaret's, Westminster. The Rev. Mr White of Dorchester, one of the assessors, commenced with prayer. Alexander Henderson and Mr Nye afterwards addressed the Assembly, justifying from Scripture the practice of covenanting, and showing its manifold advantages to the Church in all ages. Mr Nye then read the covenant from the pulpit slowly and aloud, pausing at the end of each article, while the whole audience of statesmen and divines stood up reverently to worship, and with uplifted hands swore to its performance. After prayer, at the close, the members of the House of Commons subscribed their names to the covenant in one roll of parchment, and the Assembly of Divines in another.² The covenant was taken by the House of Lords, on the 15th of October, after a sermon by Dr Temple, from Nehemiah x. 29, and an exhortation by Mr Coleman. On the following Lord's day, it was also taken by the congregations in and around London. In the month of February following, the Parliament ordained that the covenant should be taken throughout the kingdom of England, by all persons, who had sufficient knowledge, above the age of eighteen years. This order was

¹ *Baillie's Letters*, vol. i. pp. 364, 365.

² It is stated by Rushworth (*Historical Collections*, vol. v. pp. 480, 481) that this roll was subscribed by 228 members of the House of Commons, whose names are given—among these appears the name of Oliver Cromwell.

accompanied by a suitable exhortation of the Westminster Assembly. Both were sent to military officers, that it might be taken by the soldiers under their command—to governors of towns and garrisons—to committees of Parliament in the several counties, and to ministers and churchwardens, that it might be read and explained to the people. It was ordered to be publicly read in every church and congregation in the kingdom, on every day of public fasting and humiliation. English Protestants residing in foreign countries were invited to join with their brethren in England in this sacred league; and not only they, but also some of the Continental Churches expressed their readiness to comply with this invitation. These orders did not require the power of public authority to enforce them; as it is acknowledged, even by historians unfriendly to the principles of the covenant, that “the great majority of the religious part of the nation were zealous for the covenant.”

In Scotland, the Solemn League and Covenant was received with the highest approval and cordial unanimity. The General Assembly, in the act adopting it, say—“With all their hearts, and with one voice, they approve and embrace the same, as the most powerful means, by the blessing of God, for settling and preserving the true Protestant religion, with perfect peace in his Majesty’s dominions, and propagating the same to other nations, and for establishing his Majesty’s throne to all ages and generations.” Printed copies were sent to the moderator of every presbytery; and it was ordered that it should be received and explained on the Sabbath, and then, on a subsequent Sabbath, tendered to the people. Throughout the kingdom, it was everywhere received with fasting and prayer, and embraced with the utmost unanimity. In 1644, it was ratified by Act of Parliament; and it was again renewed in Scotland, by all ranks, at the close of the Second Reformation, with an acknowledgment of sins, and engagement to duties, in 1648, and by the Scottish Parliament in 1649.

As the Solemn League and Covenant was designed to be a bond of union, and the basis of the reformation of religion in the three kingdoms, provision was made that it should be taken by the Protestants in Ireland, in conjunction with their brethren in England and Scotland. In 1644, it was very generally administered throughout the north of Ireland, by four ministers, who were deputed for this purpose by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. No constraint was anywhere employed. The officers, soldiers, and people generally,

welcomed the covenant as a happy instrument of revival and fraternal confidence. It was carefully explained to them before they were admitted to swear it. Some were held back, till they had obtained more knowledge; and the only complaint was, that ministers were "over-scrupulous" in admitting persons to subscribe. A contemporary writer¹ says—"The covenant was taken in all places with great affection; partly sorrow for former judgments, and sins and miseries; partly joy, in the hopes of laying a foundation for the work of God in the land, and overthrowing Popery and Prelacy, which had been the havoc and ruin of that poor church. Sighs and tears were joined together. Indeed, they were assisted with more than the ordinary presence of God in that work in every place they went to, so that all the hearers did bear them witness that God was with them. Yea, even the malignants, who were against the covenant, durst not appear on the contrary; for the people generally held these ministers as servants of God, and coming with a blessed message and reward to them."

The Solemn League and Covenant has been greatly misrepresented and vilified. Notwithstanding it may justly be termed, in the words of an excellent historian—"A document the noblest, in its essential nature and principles, of all that are recorded among the international transactions of the world." When captious objections have been raised against it, adopted often without inquiry, and handed down even to our own times, and while it has been represented as premature, we agree with the same judicious writer, when he characterizes it "as the wisest, sublimest, and most sacred document ever framed by uninspired men;" and with him we may ask—"Has it perished amid the strife of tongues? Has it sunk into oblivion, and ceased to be a living element in the quick realms of thought? Are there none by whom it is still regarded with sacred veneration? Is it not true, that at this very moment there are many minds of great power and energy earnestly engaged in reviving its mighty principles, and fearlessly holding them forth before the world's startled gaze? And if such be the case, may it not be that what two hundred years ago was premature, has now nearly reached the period of its full maturity, and is on the point of raising up its sacred and majestic hand, strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might?"²

Rejoicing in the prospect of this revival of the principles of

¹ Adair, in his MSS. History.

² Hetherington's *History of the Westminster Assembly*, pp. 133, 134.

the Solemn League, and believing that "the period of its full maturity" is not far distant, we present a brief view of its contents and leading objects.

The Solemn League consists of a preface, six articles, and a conclusion. Article I. consists of three clauses. 1. An engagement to maintain the reformation already reached in the Church of Scotland; 2. to endeavour "the reformation of the kingdoms of England and Ireland, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, according to the Word of God, and the example of the best reformed churches;" and 3. they engage that they "shall endeavour to bring the churches of God in the three kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion." The importance of this article must be admitted by all who value evangelical doctrine and scriptural order. The Church of Scotland had attained to eminent purity in faith and worship. In England, on the other hand, the Reformation had been arrested in its progress, and the Church, in its ritual and formulas, exhibited many evidences of corruption. It was surely of vital consequence to reform the Churches in Britain, according to the pattern of the Divine Word; and to unite them in one harmonious body was an undertaking worthy of men of large hearts and sanctified intellects.

Article II. engages those who take it to "engage—without respect of persons, to endeavour the extirpation of Popery, Prelacy, superstition, heresy, schism, profaneness, and whatsoever shall be found to be contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness." From this clause the gravest objections have been brought against the covenant. It has been represented as involving intolerant and persecuting principles; and those who acknowledge its obligation have been exhibited as cherishing the most odious spirit. The least candid consideration of the document itself is sufficient to show the groundlessness of these allegations. Evidently this covenant binds us to labour to extirpate *unscriptural systems and evil practices*, and not persons. The term itself does not imply that the covenanters are to have recourse to violent means to accomplish the ends proposed. Our Saviour declared that "every plant which his heavenly Father had not planted should be rooted out" (extirpated). And every Christian must regard himself as solemnly bound to labour by all proper means to co-operate in this design. All will admit that it is the Church's duty to endeavour to root out all superstition, heresy, schism, and profaneness. And if Popery and Prelacy are, as every Presby-

terian must believe, without warrant in the Word of God, they are not of God's planting, and therefore it is equally incumbent to seek their extirpation. In the "exhortation of the Westminster Assembly" to the taking of the Solemn League, when referring to this clause, the divines assert, "Nor is any man hereby bound to offer violence to their persons, but only in his place and calling to endeavour their extirpation in a lawful way." To wrest this passage as the warranting of persecution is plainly to attach to it a meaning which the words do not properly bear, in opposition to the express declaration of the covenanters themselves. The conduct of those who framed and first took the covenant, while the supreme power of the nation was in their hands, affords ample proof that they were far from being actuated by the principles or spirit of persecution. None suffered at their hands, in person or property, merely on a religious account. The means employed for extirpating error and profaneness were moral and scriptural. Though themselves hated, vilified, and persecuted, our forefathers never persecuted.

Article III. is an engagement to maintain the rights and liberties of the Parliament, and the "King's Majesty's person and authority, in preservation and defence of true religion and liberties of the kingdom." This clause is a full refutation of the stale and oft-repeated slander that the covenanters were men of extravagant principles. It shows them to have been actuated by the purest patriotism. The preservation of true religion and scriptural liberty was their principal aim. Their allegiance to the sovereign was limited and regulated by a fervent regard to the liberties and best interests of the nation. The covenant plainly inculcates the doctrine, which is fundamental to British freedom, that when the monarch violates the original compact, and tramples on the constitutional rights of his subjects, the sovereign power reverts to the people. Both the ruler and the ruled are to be guided by a paramount regard to the defence and promotion of true religion.

Article IV. engages the covenanters, "with all faithfulness, to endeavour the discovery and punishment of incendiaries and malignants, in an orderly and legal manner," &c. This article was evidently of a temporary nature, though the principle involved in it is susceptible of application to other times and circumstances. For a number of years before the covenant was framed, a numerous party, significantly termed MALIG-

NANTS,¹ had, under high pretences of zeal for the Church, introduced unscriptural and antichristian innovations, and had imposed them by severe civil penalties on the consciences of their brethren. They professed devoted loyalty, and urged forward the most arbitrary and unconstitutional measures of the government, and they assiduously sowed suspicions and dissensions between the king and his most faithful subjects. To oppose and punish such persons was evidently a sacred duty, as their presence and counsels about the throne were the grand obstacles to the establishment of constitutional freedom. They were, in truth, inveterate enemies to both their king and country; and as such were certainly deserving of punishment. "*Take away the wicked from before the king, and his throne shall be established in righteousness.*"²

Article V. contains an engagement of the covenanters to "endeavour, according to their place and interest, that the kingdoms may remain conjoined in a firm peace and union to all posterity." The object of a former article was to effect the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion in the Church: this is an engagement to secure and perpetuate peace on a solid basis to these nations in their civil capacity. The Solemn League was thus a treaty of union between the three kingdoms, promoting their mutual interests and common prosperity. When we contemplate the broad and scriptural basis on which this confederation was founded, we cannot doubt that had it been adhered to, jarring elements had long since disappeared, and the blessings of firm concord and a happy peace would have been attained and become permanent.

The Sixth Article pledges those who take the covenant to mutual defence, fraternal union and mutual assistance, and the advancement of the principles of the covenant. The conclusion is an engagement to all godly practice, with a solemn appeal to God as the Searcher of hearts for the sincerity of the covenanters. It need not be shown how important is this part of

¹ The celebrated George Gillespie, the most eloquent of the Scottish Commissioners who attended the Westminster Assembly, left a dying testimony against the admission of Malignants to places of power and trust in the nation. An able tractate from his pen, written against "Association with Malignants," is among his collected works; it may be safely affirmed respecting it, that for scriptural argument, and calm, logical reasoning, it is not surpassed by any of the controversial pieces of that period. The principles which it advocates are, in all ages, an essential part of a faithful testimony for truth.

² Proverbs xxv. 6.

the vow to all who desire the prevalence of pure and undefiled religion. Our illustrious ancestors did not regard the articles of the covenant merely as principles to be professed. They viewed them as worthy to be promoted by devoted and sustained action, as entitled to have all sacrifices made for their universal diffusion, and to be embodied in all holy and exemplary living. Such should still be the evidence of sincerity and devotedness which those who embrace the covenant should present to the world. Great principles thus professed and reduced to practice become the seed of a future glorious harvest. "*They that come of Jacob shall take root; Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.*"¹

From this brief view of the contents of the Solemn League and Covenant, the grand OBJECTS of this celebrated instrument may be readily gathered.

1. It was, first of all, a sacred bond *for the safety and preservation of those who engaged in it, and of all that they hold most dear and valuable.* In the preamble to the League, the framers refer to plots and conspiracies of the enemies of the Reformation; and declare that they enter into the covenant for "the preservation of themselves and their religion from utter ruin and destruction." That this was no idle alarm, the history of those times bears ample testimony. The spirit of Popery actuated the Court. The fruits of Jesuit policy were seen in the forcible suppression of Protestantism, and the slaughter of Protestants in many parts of the continent. The gunpowder treason in England and the Irish massacre had but recently occurred. It was therefore a justifiable and necessary measure of self-preservation for the Covenanters to protect themselves, and even to aim at the extirpation of a system which authorized such treacherous and sanguinary proceedings. Even the stringent regulations concerning the taking of the covenant were rendered necessary, as a means of preservation from the bloody plots of Papists, and the abettors of arbitrary power. History testifies that a plot for the universal massacre of the heads of the Covenanters, by the high royalist party, had been deliberately framed, but was defeated for want of concert, or from jealousy and mistrust among the principal actors.*

The Solemn League was, moreover, *a standard displayed for the defence and preservation of civil and religious liberty.* Never were the grand principles of constitutional liberty more plainly and fully declared; and the just limits of the power of rulers

¹ Isa. xxvii. 6.

* Aikman's *History of Scotland*, vol. iv. pp. 126, 127.

and the rights of the people more clearly exhibited, than in this admirable instrument. The men who framed and entered into this bond were neither anti-government in their principles, nor opposed to legitimate monarchy. Theirs was a loyalty not blind or fitful, but enlightened and scriptural. They believed that both rulers and people are under God's authority, and are responsible to Him for the exercise of their respective functions, whether in setting up rulers, or in exercising political power. The third article of the Solemn League plainly implies that the people have a right to appoint rulers, and prescribe the conditions of government, according to the will of God; that no rulers should be chosen who are not friendly to true religion; and that the supreme ruler is bound to respect and maintain the constitutional liberties of the nation. Civil liberty was regarded as founded on and inseparable from religious purity and freedom; and the basis of both was declared to be the Word of God. The king was to be amenable to the authority of the enthroned Mediator; while the subjection and civil duties of the people were to be regulated in accordance with his revealed will. In these fundamental principles, so briefly but yet so clearly enunciated, are contained the germs of all true and permanent liberty; and it is not too much to say, that to the Solemn League and Covenant, Britain and America are largely indebted for the constitutional freedom which they possess above other nations.

2. Another grand object proposed in the Solemn League and Covenant was the *extension of reformation*. It was an instrument at once for revival in the Church, and for the propagation of true religion throughout the world. Long prior to the era of modern missions, it recognized the paramount duty of Christians to make known God's "light and salvation" throughout the nations, and was a sacred confederacy formed by devoted men for the universal establishment of the Saviour's kingdom. The reformation that had been happily attained in Scotland, the Covenanters earnestly sought to extend to England and Ireland. Alexander Henderson, in the noble designs of his capacious and catholic spirit, contemplated proposing the Solemn League, as a means of union and propagation of truth to the Reformed States and Churches on the continent; and some of the latter signified their readiness to enter formally into the vow of God. Had this admirable project been accomplished, what a different moral and religious aspect would European nations present from what they now exhibit! Popery

and its innumerable attendant evils—ignorance, superstition, oppression, and immorality—would have been banished from this quarter of the globe. Britain itself, illuminated with Gospel truth, would have been the centre of light to other nations, and from it would have “sounded out the Word” of God to remote regions. May not this admirable instrument be destined yet to be a valuable means for promoting the great missionary enterprise? So soon as the principles of the Solemn League and Covenant shall have been properly appreciated and its obligation felt, the propagation of true religion at home, and the conversion of the world, will appear a matter of paramount importance, and will call forth the sanctified energies of the Church to a far larger extent than we have yet witnessed.

3. The Solemn League and Covenant was designed *to promote union and uniformity* among the friends of truth. The importance of these objects cannot be overrated. Union on a scriptural basis is most valuable; and union, to be permanent and productive of its full happy fruits, must be sought in the way of uniformity in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government in the Church. The primitive Church was thus distinguished, for they were “of one heart and of one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel.” Inspired prophecy, moreover, assures us that this shall be characteristic of future times. “The Lord shall be King over all the earth. In that day there shall be one Lord, and his name one.”¹ The article in the covenant respecting union is strikingly and beautifully expressed. “We shall endeavour,” declare the Covenanters, “to bring the Churches of God in the three kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and uniformity and religion, confession of faith, form of Church government, directory for worship and catechizing, that we, and our posterity after us, may, as brethren, live in faith and love, and the Lord may delight to dwell in the midst of us.” There never was a more comprehensive basis of union than that which was thus presented to the Churches. The Solemn League and Covenant did, for a season, unite the friends of truth in the bond of a holy brotherhood; and, under the Divine blessing, it may do so again. While other schemes of union, in which truth is compromised, and in which there is no provision made for promoting purity of worship and ordinances, must prove abortive, this will be lasting, and productive of the most salutary results.

4. *The removal of Prelacy and numerous evils connected with*

¹ Zechariah xiv. 9.

it, was another distinct object of the Solemn League. Our forefathers conscientiously believed that the system of Prelacy, as established in England, and attempted to be forced upon the people of Scotland, was destitute of Scripture warrant, oppressive, and hostile to the interests of true religion.¹ The Parliament that convened the Westminster Assembly in both Houses had condemned Prelacy as “an evil justly offensive and burdensome to the kingdom, a great impediment to the growth of religion, and very prejudicial to the state and government of the kingdom.” The Solemn League embodied the nation’s protest against what had obstructed the progress of reformation, and had been found oppressive to faithful men. If such are the fruits of Prelacy, and if, as some distinguished prelatists themselves have declared,² diocesan episcopacy is unknown in the New Testament, and had no existence in the Christian Church for the *first three hundred years*, who will say that our forefathers were wrong in abjuring it in the covenant, and in seeking its extirpation?

Lastly. The Solemn League was designed to be *an eminent means for promoting practical godliness*. In the conclusion, the Covenanters declare “their true and unfeigned purpose, desire, and endeavour, for themselves, and for all others under their power and charge, both in public and private, in all duties they owe to God and man, to amend their lives, and each one to go before another in the example of a real reformation.” Such were the noble ends of our fathers’ covenant,—ends in which the glory of God, and the interests of true religion and genuine morality, were deeply concerned. If such objects are distinctly proposed in the Divine Word, and are of the highest value to communities and individuals, we may surely conclude that the principles and obligation of the covenant are morally unalterable; and we are, besides, warranted to expect that, in a day of approaching revival, these will be universally acknowledged.

The view of this admirable document presented by an excellent historian is as just as it is eloquently expressed:—

“It is difficult to conceive how any calm, unprejudiced, thoughtful, and religious man can peruse this very solemn

¹ The particular form of Prelacy which Charles I. and his adviser Laud sought to establish by force in Scotland, was, in various respects, Popery in doctrine and worship; and allied as it was with arbitrary power, it excited the just indignation of those who loved scriptural truth, and valued the principles of civil and religious liberty.

² Archbishop Whately.

document without feeling upon his mind an overawing sense of its sublimity and sacredness. The most important of man's interests for time and for eternity are included within its ample scope, and made the subjects of a Solemn League with each other, and a sacred covenant with God. Religious liberty and peace are the grand elements of human welfare, to the preservation of which it bound the empire; and as those by whom it was framed knew well that there can be no safety for these in a land where the minds of the community are dark with ignorance, warped by superstition, misled by error, and degraded by tyranny, civil and ecclesiastical, they pledged themselves to seek the extirpation of these pernicious evils. . . . Aware, alas! how often the wisest and best schemes are perverted and destroyed by base intrigues of selfish and designing men, the covenanters solemnly pledged themselves to each other and to God, not to suffer themselves to be divided or withdrawn from the constant and persevering prosecution of their great and sacred cause, till its triumph should be secured or their own lives terminated. In this strong resolution were involved a lofty singleness of purpose, deliberate determination, and not only self-denial, but, if necessary, self-sacrifice, that to the world a great example might be given for better times to follow and to realize."¹

¹ Hetherington's *History of Westminster Assembly*, pp. 132, 133.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONTINUED OBLIGATION AND RENEWAL OF THE BRITISH COVENANTS.

FROM the historical view we have given of the Covenants, National and Solemn League, it must appear manifest that they are *national covenants*, eminently seasonable and comprehensive, and that their adoption as public instruments of revival and reformation was productive of most beneficial results. If the doctrine which has been already advanced concerning the moral identity of nations be true, and we are satisfied that it rests on grounds at once rational and scriptural, then these memorable deeds must be regarded as being of permanent obligation. They were certainly lawful and scriptural as to their matter; they were entered into at a seasonable time; the objects which they contemplated were of the highest importance, both in respect to the promotion of the Divine glory, and to the best interests of the Church and nation; and there were special tokens of the Divine approval upon the proceedings which were consequent upon their introduction.

The British covenants are of continued obligation:—

First of all,—Because the MATTER of them is *moral* and *scriptural*, and therefore worthy to be prosecuted in all ages. The intrinsic obligation to present the same testimony for truth, and to seek alike deliverance from the evils specified in the covenants of our fathers, devolves with equal right upon us as upon them. Till the great ends of these deeds shall have been fully attained, they lay each succeeding generation professing Christ's truths, and acknowledging the authority of his Word, under obligation to labour for their accomplishment. On the ground of the moral character of our fathers' federal deeds, they may be regarded as, in some sort, obligatory upon other churches and nations, besides those that can trace their descent directly from the original Covenanters. And certainly, those who have sprung from the same stock, and who in America, or in the distant colonial dependencies of Britain, owe much of the scriptural light and freedom which they enjoy to the

principles developed in the sacred vows of Britain, and to the blessing that has remarkably rested upon a nation which was married to the Lord, have peculiar reasons to view these covenants as worthy of all admiration and devoted regard.

But secondly, and chiefly,—These covenants were strictly NATIONAL DEEDS, and on this ground they are of perpetual obligation upon the British nation. The supreme authorities in Church and State entered into them—the people of all ranks willingly and joyfully came under the engagement. They became part of the fundamental compact between the ruler and the subject; and were assumed, after solemn and careful deliberation, not only as the ground of international union, and mutual protection and intercourse, but likewise as the basis of national legislation and administration. If the British nation be morally the same society that came under these engagements, then it is certainly yet bound to carry out the ends which they proposed, and that until these shall have been fully attained. If righteous laws bind posterity—if oaths are binding—if bonds oblige heirs—if compacts are of force while the national society exists—then assuredly the British covenants have a continued obligation, and that of a higher and more sacred character than any laws and compacts which pertain merely to worldly interests and relations. A treaty about war or peace or commerce continues to bind, and it must surely be much more binding when its object is religion. The engagements of rulers to a people, or of a people to their rulers—as in the Magna Charta and the Bill of Rights—are held to be of fundamental, permanent obligation; and certainly the covenant by which both rulers and people are not only mutually bound to one another, but also to Him who is moral Governor of the nations, and Prince of the kings of the earth, can plead a still higher obligation. It is universally admitted that a righteous league between nation and nation is binding; and while the breach of international treaties is held to be perfidious and criminal, is there not aggravated sin in a nation breaking its covenant with God? Before the permanent obligation of the British covenants can be set aside, objectors will require to show that the nation is not possessed of a permanent moral identity; or, admitting this, that it is not still bound by its own just engagements. But such an identity and obligation can only be denied by repudiating, at the same time, all public faith, and by maintaining that no bonds or treaties whatever bind posterity. Few, it is presumed, are prepared to maintain

a position that would evidently disorganize society, and destroy all public confidence. Those who, in our day, are most ready to repudiate the obligation of our fathers' sacred covenants, can strenuously plead for the continued obligation of engagements about matters of civil or worldly interest, and would vehemently resist as opposed to all right reason, and a daring violation of public faith, the repudiation of the national debt, of the Habeas Corpus Act, or of the compact of the British nation with the House of Hanover.

The allegation that the Covenants, National and Solemn League, were rejected by the nation at the Restoration by the Act Rescissory, and that they have ceased to be obligatory, on the principle that the authority which enacted a law may afterwards repeal it, is of no weight with those who consider properly the circumstances of the case, or who have due regard to scriptural precedent. In the covenants of our illustrious forefathers, the exalted Mediator, the Head of the nation, was one of the contracting parties; and He can never give to a people a right to dispense with the obligation of solemn duties enjoined in his Word. The apostasies of ancient Israel and the enactments of wicked princes did not set aside the obligation of the National Covenant, which God repeatedly styles *his*—the breach of which, too, inspired prophets frequently and expressly ascribe as the grand cause of national judgments. The existence of national sins necessarily implies that a people are implicated in the guilt of their forefathers, and that they are bound, too, by their federal engagements. Few, it is presumed, will venture to carry out to its legitimate consequences the principle of the objection; and assert not only that the British covenants are not binding, but likewise that no such public federal deeds are of continued obligation. This can only be attempted by a denial, or utter perversion of the many scriptural declarations, in which the permanent obligation of national covenants is declared or plainly inferred.

*Testimonies in favour of the continued Obligation of the
British Covenants.*

The doctrine of the continued obligation of the British covenants has been maintained and inculcated by many of the most distinguished servants of God in these countries, from the period that they were first framed down to the present time.

Our venerable ancestors—the reformers and martyrs of the seventeenth century—explicitly avouched this sentiment, and declared their adherence to it in the most solemn circumstances. The Solemn League itself asserts its lasting obligation. The Covenanters declare themselves bound to endeavour that the nations may “remain conjoined in a firm peace and union to all posterity” (Fifth Article). The General Assembly that proposed and adopted the Solemn League, in their Act of August 17, 1643, declare the covenant to be “the most powerful means, by the blessing of God, for settling and preserving the Protestant religion with perfect peace in his Majesty’s dominions, and propagating the same to other nations, and for establishing his Majesty’s throne to all ages and generations.”

On the last occasion, too, of the national renewal of the Solemn League in Scotland, the General Assembly in its “SEASONABLE AND NECESSARY WARNING,” dated July 27, 1649, strongly asserts its paramount obligation—“Albeit the League and Covenant be despised by that prevailing party in England, and the work of uniformity, through the retardments and obstructions that have come in the way, be almost forgotten by these kingdoms, yet the obligation of that Covenant is perpetual; and all the duties contained therein are constantly to be minded and prosecuted by every one of us, and our posterity, according to their place and stations.”

The martyrs that suffered under the prelatical persecution, from the first to the last, avouched their steadfast belief in the perpetual obligation of the British covenants, and sealed with their blood this as a special and prominent article of their testimony. “God,” said the noble Marquis of Argyle on the scaffold, “hath laid engagements on Scotland. We are tied by covenants to religion and reformation. Those that were then unborn are yet engaged; and it passeth the power of all the magistrates under heaven to absolve them from the oath of God. They deceive themselves, and, it may be, would deceive others, who think otherwise.” The Rev. James Guthrie, who suffered a few days after the Marquis of Argyle, said in his dying testimony—“I do bear my witness to the National Covenant of Scotland, and the Solemn League and Covenant betwixt the three kingdoms. These sacred, solemn public oaths of God, I believe, can be loosed by no person, or party, or power upon earth, but are still binding upon these kingdoms, and will be for ever hereafter; and are ratified and sealed by the conversion of many thousand souls,

since our entering thereunto." The memorable last words of this excellent man indicate how cordially he believed in the perpetual obligation of the covenants; and were prophetic of the future revival and triumph of the principles contained in them. A few minutes before he was turned over on the scaffold, raising the cap from his face, he firmly and loudly exclaimed, "*The covenants—the covenants will yet be Scotland's reviving.*"

Since the Revolution in 1688, when a settlement, civil and ecclesiastical, was established, which amounted to a disannulling of the Covenanted Reformation, there have been, in these countries, always a number of witnesses who have testified in behalf of the perpetual obligation of the nation's scriptural vows. True it is, the rulers at that period passed over in oblivion the eminent attainments of reforming times, and the nation ingloriously acquiesced in the neglect and apostasy; while even the Presbyterian Church of Scotland uttered no protestation against acts which despoiled her of some of her most valuable privileges, and offered no plea in favour of former sacred engagements. But, for many years after the Revolution, a number of the most distinguished evangelical ministers of the Established Church of Scotland continued to plead in their writings for the obligation of the covenants—to point out the evils flowing from the neglect and breach of federal vows—and to urge upon the Church and nation a return to covenanted fidelity. Until the time that the baleful influence of *moderatism* had extensively corrupted the doctrine, and marred the discipline of the Scottish National Church, there were always some within her pale to plead for the integrity and binding force of her time-honoured federal engagements; and these were known as the ablest advocates of scriptural doctrine and practical godliness. The men whose writings tended to promote the cause of evangelical truth, and to nourish the piety of Scotland during the incubus of moderatism and the declension of practical godliness, which characterized a great part of the eighteenth century, almost without exception held the permanent obligation of the nation's sacred vows. Though their connection with the Revolution Church placed them in a position most unfavourable to give proper effect to their pleadings, there can be no doubt that their writings tended to keep alive in the public mind a sense of federal obligation.¹

¹ The excellent Willison of Dundee, whose works have been eminently blessed for the edification and comfort of God's people, in various parts of his writings, refers to the obligation of the British covenants, and represents

From the close of the Prelatical persecution, and the era of the Revolution, there have been not only individuals, but likewise religious bodies, that have publicly professed adherence to the Covenants, National and Solemn League, and that have embodied this profession in their ecclesiastical symbols. The Society People—much as they have been misrepresented and reproached by historians of former and later times, and by writers of fiction—accounted it their honour to maintain the scriptural principles of the Second Reformation ; and especially, to hold fast the sacredness and inviolability of the nation's vows. The Old Dissenters, as they were termed, refused to incorporate either with the civil or ecclesiastical establishment of the Revolution, from a faithful regard to the Covenants, National and Solemn League, which they cordially believed to be scriptural, and from the obligation of which they held that no earthly power could absolve them. However the profane moralist may sneer at such men, or persons of lax and time-serving principles may condemn them, it must be confessed that they made a noble stand for sound principle, at a time when it was no easy task to oppose themselves to a nation's defection. Candid historians have at length begun to do them tardy justice ; and we may hope that the day is coming when, with the revival and spread of evangelical truth, their principles and conduct will be still further appreciated.

The Reformed Presbyterian Church, claiming to be the proper descendants of Scotland's covenanted reformers and martyrs, from its earliest organization, embodied an acknowledgment of the perpetual obligation of the British covenants, in the fundamental articles of its public profession ; and has been a constant witness to it, in every by-past period of its history. It has given the most decided and unambiguous testimony to this important principle, by refusing to incorporate with the national society, or to take any part in national measures which would, in any degree, compromise it. The fathers of the Secession, without exception, professed in their writings and public ecclesiastical deeds the same doctrine ; and though that section of the Church early countenanced practices which appear to us incompatible with a full admission of the national obligation of the British covenants ; and the larger part of the Secession body at a later period gave up this article of their profession, there has always been a distinguished minority, that departure from them as a principal cause of evil in the Church, and of Divine displeasure against the nation.

have firmly maintained the principles which others rejected. Such truly eminent men, as John Brown of Haddington, Dr M'Crie, the historian of Knox and Melville; and Stevenson and Paxton, have emitted vindications of the doctrine of continued federal engagement, which opponents have never been able to answer; and they themselves willingly endured privations in maintaining this important doctrine.

At various times, too, the principle of descending covenant obligation has been practically exemplified by the renovation, by the Secession Church, of the British covenants, in accommodation to its circumstances as an ecclesiastical body. This was done shortly after the first organization of the Secession Church, by one of its branches;¹ and on several occasions, in later times, by the Original Seceders, that portion which, amidst various defections and trials, has adhered steadfastly to the grand principles of the Secession.² The large and influential body—the Free Church of Scotland—though it does not in its constitution formally or explicitly own the obligation of the federal deeds of the fathers of the Scottish Reformation, and though its “*Claim of Right*” is, in several instances, evidently incompatible with a full recognition of the Reformation attainments, has yet manifested, by numbers of its ministers and members, a sense of the value and importance of covenant-obligation. In the “*Overture of a Testimony*” prepared by a committee, consisting of several leading ministers of the Free Church, the covenants of our fathers are mentioned in terms of the highest respect; and it is explicitly declared that both the Church and the nation lie under special obligation to be the Lord's people, in virtue of the scriptural vows of their forefathers. An association, too, has been recently formed among ministers and other office-bearers in the Free Church, in whose declaration of fundamental principles, the obligation of the British covenants is strongly

¹ The Antiburgher part of the Secession.—See Gibb's *Display*.

² The most recent instance of covenant-renovation by this section of the Church occurred at the meeting of Synod held in Glasgow, in May 1853, when the ministers and elders assembled manifested their earnest attachment to the British covenants, by swearing them, in a bond suited to their state and circumstances.

The doctrine of continued federal obligation, and the special obligation of the British covenants, have been ably exhibited and defended in various writings of the late Dr M'Crie, particularly in his *Sermons on the Unity of the Church*, and in the *Testimony of the Original Secession Church*; and in the writings of Stevenson and Paxton.

asserted. It is, moreover, confessed that prevailing evils in the Free Church and throughout the land are to be traced to breach of covenant; and the proposal is put forward to adopt practical measures for the revival of a sense of covenant-obligation, and even for the public renewal of former federal engagements. In some of the Presbyteries of the Free Church, a similar proposal had been made and entertained. Such movements are to be regarded with deep interest. They indicate the special favour of the God of our fathers in keeping alive a sense of the principle of federal obligation. He remembers his covenant, by exciting his faithful servants to remember it. Though some may not be fully aware of the consequences to which a practical owning of the British covenants would lead them, in dissolving connection with corrupt civil systems, yet we hail these pleadings and proposals as showing that great principles long neglected are rising into public notice, and that the time is hastening on, when, in the way of solemn federal dedication, many devoted men will resolutely contend for them, and achieve for them a glorious triumph. Events of a solemn character that are transpiring throughout the nations—the ominous signs of trials and changes of a momentous kind approaching—and the felt necessities of the Church for revival and a bond of union and co-operation in Christian effort, and for common defence against enemies and increasing evils, are pressing upon thoughtful and earnest minds inquiries into the nature of federal obligation; and are urging them to seek after the observance of an ordinance which has been eminently owned in past ages as an instrument of deliverance to the Church, and which inspired prediction assures us will be the basis of future revival and enlargement. These we regard as hopeful symptoms of the progress and ascendancy of a martyr-testimony; and we cannot but cherish the assured conviction, that the period is not far distant, when, in the way of federal union, Ephraim and Judah shall be “one stick” in the Lord’s hand—when the Lord shall be King over all the earth—when there shall be one Lord, and his name one.

CHAPTER V.

RENOVATION OF THE COVENANTS, NATIONAL AND SOLEMN LEAGUE, BY THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

THE duty of renewing the solemn federal engagements of ancestors, at suitable times, has been maintained in all past ages, by those who were concerned for the Divine honour, or were desirous of the prosperity of true religion. Sometimes it may have been questioned, whether there was a special and distinct call to the duty. But when circumstances, internal or external, appeared to point to confederation as a means of arresting evil or of securing good, faithful men have never hesitated to have recourse to the renewal of former religious covenants. Some distinguished writers have concluded, from a careful inspection of the Inspired Word, that public covenanting was performed, not less than *three times*, during the encampment of Israel at Mount Horeb. However this be, it is certain that the national covenant then entered into was renewed *forty years* after, at the end of the wanderings in the wilderness, in the view of the immediate entrance of Israel into the land of promise. Five-and-twenty years after, at the conclusion of the wars of Canaan, Joshua led the people to another act of renewing the covenant of their fathers, and pledged them to devoted obedience, in the prospect of their settlement in their covenanted inheritance.

In subsequent periods of the history of the Hebrew commonwealth, under the reforming princes of Judah, recourse was had to covenant-renovation, as an approved means of recovery from apostasy, of revival from decay, as well as a tried way of advancing true religion and national prosperity. In none of these instances was it alleged that the mere acknowledgment of former covenant-engagements was sufficient. The actual exemplification of covenanting was reckoned of primary importance. The explicit renewal of the vows of ancestors was regarded as a proper and necessary expression of contrition for past backsliding, as the most impressive method of forsaking evil courses

and returning to God, and the proper basis of all right reformation.

Such approved examples of covenant-renovation furnish a Divine warrant for the duty, which cannot be gainsayed or set aside, without impugning the wisdom of Him who has recorded them, and who has appended to them the seal of his special approval. It is, moreover, worthy of remark, that when the great body of the Jewish people had forsaken the covenant of God, and had lost the sense of its continued obligation, a minority of the nation testified their cordial adhesion to it, by publicly renewing it; and this, too, with tokens of gracious approval. Thus, when the ten tribes made defection from the house of David, and in gross violation of the national covenant fell into idolatry, the small kingdom of Judah adhered to the vows of their fathers, as the Divine compact between rulers and ruled, and as the charter of their distinguishing privileges, and on various occasions solemnly and explicitly renewed them. Again, while the majority of the nation remained with their possessions in the country of Chaldea, the remnant that returned from the Babylonish captivity, animated by holy prophets who were specially raised up, and led by servants of God eminently endued with the Spirit, laid the foundation of their civil and ecclesiastical polity by acts of renewed federal dedication. We have thus a clear Divine warrant, not only for the national renewal of scriptural vows, but likewise for the duty of a minority of faithful men explicitly avouching their attachment to the same covenants, when the nation as such has abandoned them, adapting the national bond to their altered condition and circumstances.

The Reformed Presbyterian Church in these countries has, from the earliest periods of its history, acted on these principles, and given to them effect in her profession and practice. So strict and uniform has been her adherence to the scriptural covenants that were entered into by the nation in the reforming periods, that she has been designated by way of distinction and eminence—the Covenanting Church. Though some others have embodied in their ecclesiastical profession the principle of covenant-obligation, this section of the Church alone has manifested that attachment to the British covenants, which has led her, amidst privations and sacrifices of no insignificant kind, to refuse to enter into any connection, civil or ecclesiastical, that is inconsistent with the fullest maintenance of the perpetual obligation of these

venerable deeds, or that would interfere with the prosecution of the great ends which they contemplated.

During the prelatical persecution under Charles II. and James II., the Scottish martyrs not only testified from the scaffold to the scriptural excellency and binding force of the nation's vows ; but when the majority of the Presbyterian people, crushed by lengthened suffering, admitted the royal supremacy, by accepting ensnaring *Indulgences*, a faithful remnant that weathered the storm, and resolutely endured all hardships rather than compromise sound principles, manifested too the most devoted adherence to the covenants, refusing to purchase life by abjuring them, and regarding them as the bond of their union, and the last hope of revival and blessing for their native country. When others had acted perfidiously, they recognized the special duty of a minority to avouch their regard to scriptural vows ; and when exposed to perils of no ordinary kind, they publicly and explicitly renewed them. Thus at Lanark, in 1666, those who appeared in arms in defence of their most valued rights, solemnly renewed the covenants, when on their way to Pentland ; and it is recorded of the transaction, that the horsemen of the persecutors, though in view when they engaged in the work, left the Covenanters undisturbed. The shield of Jehovah's protection was visibly around his servants, while they pledged themselves anew to his service. In several of the public testimonies which were emitted, as the persecution continued and was increased in intensity, the continued obligation of the covenants was assigned a prominent place. When the Covenanters appeared in arms at Bothwell Bridge, and made a valiant attempt to rescue their native country from the most grievous oppression, they refused to accept doubtful aid, by compromising the grand principle of covenant-obligation, or acknowledging in any way the monarch who had trampled on the nation's dearest rights, and who had violated every proper compact by which the relation between the ruler and the subjects was regulated.

The heroic Society People, who manfully bared their bosoms to the sword, when others adopted a time-serving policy, clung to the covenants of the Church and nation, as the grand means of union and deliverance. When their faithful leaders had shed their blood on the scaffold, when their ranks were thinned by the sword of the enemy, and when they stood daily exposed to torture and death, they notwithstanding raised aloft the banner for truth ; and the motto, "*For Christ's*

Crown and Covenant," appeared conspicuously upon it, as it did when their fathers confronted the hosts of prelatical oppressors.

The successors of these noble-minded men, at the period of the Revolution, followed in their steps, with dauntless courage and unyielding resolution. With sorrow of heart they witnessed a settlement framed, which, both in its civil and ecclesiastical parts, was a palpable abandonment of former scriptural attainments, and a rejection of the sacred engagements into which the nation had repeatedly entered. Their duty was plain. When others ignobly succumbed under the yoke of the oppressor, and lost the favourable opportunity of bringing back the Church and nation to a sense of their allegiance to Messiah the Prince, they openly dissented, and refused to incorporate with the ecclesiastical establishment and the national society, which were then evidently constituted on a perfidious abandonment of the covenants of their fathers. At the period of the Revolution, a few, within the courts of the National Church of Scotland, uttered a public testimony in behalf of a recognition of former vows ; but this was contemptuously disregarded. Those who spoke timidly in favour of the covenants, yielded to the prevailing defection ; and not only was no protestation offered by the ecclesiastical courts against retaining the infamous Act Rescissory in the Statute-Book, but oppressive measures were speedily resorted to against those who dared to plead in the ecclesiastical courts in favour of recognizing the obligation of the covenants.² In such a case, there was no alternative left to those who maintained faithful allegiance to Messiah the Prince, and who valued his royal prerogatives above all earthly treasures. They voluntarily separated themselves from connections that were evil and ensnaring ; and they went forth without the camp to Jesus, "bearing his reproach." The scattered Society People—the remnants of *twenty-eight* years' cruel and relentless persecution—deprived of a stated ministry, maintained a holy fellowship, in associations for united prayer, and mutual spiritual

² The Rev. John M'Millan of Balmaghie, who afterwards acceded to the *Society People*, was actually tried by the Presbytery of Kirkcudbright, and sentence of deposition from the ministry was pronounced against him, for no other crime than that of pleading for the obligation of the National Covenants. This sentence was afterwards confirmed by the Commission ! The courts of the Established Church of Scotland are therefore to be regarded, after the Revolution, as not merely refusing to own the obligation of the Covenants, but as determinedly opposed to such an acknowledgment, and as persecuting faithful men on account of their advocacy of a nation's scriptural vows.

converse, on the basis of their covenanted confederation. In these circumstances, it is not to be wondered at that they should look to the covenants of their fathers as a happy means of preserving them from national defection, and of conducting them to the privileges of full ecclesiastical communion. The Reformation in Scotland had been begun and auspiciously carried forward not only without the aid of the ruling powers, but even in opposition to them, by means of solemn covenants. It had been restored to more than pristine beauty, and mightily advanced, after long years of decay and oppression, by the same instrumentality. The covenants had all along been the watchword of civil and ecclesiastical freedom; and never had the covenanted standard been faithfully unfurled without inspiring the hearts of the faithful with renewed courage, supplying a defence against the power of enemies, and leading forward the Church to the enjoyment of higher privileges. Filled with such recollections, the Covenanters who stood aloof from the Revolution Settlement early purposed the renewal of the British covenants, regarding it as their present duty to protest, in the most solemn and public manner, against national defection, and considering this step, too, as an eminent means of safety and enlargement. The first attempt made for the performance of this important duty after the Revolution, disappointed the expectations of the faithful adherents of the Covenanted Reformation. The *Angus* or *Cameronian Regiment*, that rendered such signal service to the Scottish Convention of Estates, in protecting them from the infamous Dundee, and the adherents of the abdicated James, and at Dunkeld, soon made defection from the ground of the Second Reformation, in accepting office, and taking oaths, binding them to a system eversive of the covenanted constitution. The preachers Linning, Shields, and Boyd, who ministered to the scattered societies for a short time after the martyrdom of Renwick, yielded to the expressed wish of the Fellowship Meetings, to renew the covenants. But in the bond prepared for this purpose, they introduced clauses which acknowledged the Revolution Settlement, the tendency of which was to draw those who took the covenant to incorporate with it. This insidious attempt had nearly led away from their steadfastness some who had weathered the storm of persecution. So difficult is it to detect evil when peace succeeds to lengthened trial, and when the way of defection becomes popular and general. The sagacious and far-seeing mind of the godly and devoted Sir Robert Hamilton was the first to perceive the

danger, and to warn the societies against a course which would have involved an abandonment of reformation attainments.

When the Rev. John M'Millan, of Balmaghie, acceded to the Society People, and they had obtained that which they so eagerly desired, and for which they had so long patiently waited—a stated ministry—the proposal to renew the covenants was earnestly taken up, and carried into accomplishment. After the design had been duly considered in the various fellowship meetings, the few faithful adherents of a covenanted testimony came to the resolution to connect the renovation of the covenants with the dispensation of the Lord's Supper. Owing to their dispersed state, and the want of ministerial help, they could enjoy this precious ordinance but seldom. It was therefore deemed suitable to connect with the sacramental vow an explicit and public acknowledgment of the solemn covenants of their forefathers.

Accordingly, Wednesday, the 23d of July 1712, was observed as a day of fasting and humiliation by those who designed to engage in the service, and who convened in considerable numbers from different parts of Scotland, at a place called Auchinsaugh, near Hamilton. The opening devotional services were conducted by the Rev. John M'Millan, and afterwards Mr John M'Neill, probationer, preached a full and appropriate discourse from Jeremiah l. 4, 5, illustrating and confirming the two following propositions:—1. *That a people in covenant with God may be forgetful of, and deal falsely in their covenant;* and 2. *That it is the duty of a people who have broken covenant with God to engage themselves again to the Lord by the renovation of their covenant.* After the conclusion of the sermon, the Covenants, National and Solemn League, were first read; and again an acknowledgment of sins, which had been carefully prepared, enumerating at length the public sins of the Church and the nation, and which displayed breach of covenant with God and its consequences, was also read; and the principal matters contained in this paper were embodied in the confession made by the congregation in solemn prayer. The assembly was then dismissed with a suitable exhortation, urging intended covenanters to seek a heart-melting frame for the right performance of the important service.

On Thursday, the 24th July, at the same place, the great work of covenant-renovation was performed with all solemnity—the Rev. John M'Millan having first preached, with much fulness and pointed application, from Isaiah xlv. 5. At the

close of the discourse, the acknowledgment of sins was again read ; and then a public confession was openly made before the congregation by members who had been chargeable with steps of defection—the minister himself making, with the people, confession of his sins in the ministry. The sins thus mentioned were then specially confessed to God in prayer ; and the *engagement to duties* being read to the congregation, the minister showed that the design of this paper was to adapt the covenants to the circumstances of those who were to be employed in the renewal. Suitable warning having been given to deter the unworthy, and the gracious presence and assistance of the Holy Spirit having been sought in solemn prayer, the minister proceeded to administer the oath of the covenant—the people who engaged elevating their right hands at the end of each article. The solemn and interesting service was then concluded, by appropriate exhortations, in relation to the importance and spirit of performing covenant-engagements.

On the Sabbath immediately following the work of covenanting, those who had thus avouched anew their adherence to the sacred vows of their fathers, joined together in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. Thus they ratified their engagements over the precious memorials of the Saviour's death, and they sought, before they returned to their several spheres of labour and trial, to realize the fellowship of saints, and communion with the God of their fathers. The act of renovation was performed, on this occasion, by swearing the original covenants, with *marginal alterations*—accommodating them to the condition of the covenanters, who used these national federal deeds as a basis of union in principle and action, and as a public protest against national defection. The engagement to duties was designed to be of the nature of a bond, pledging the swearers to the practical application of the principles of the covenant.

Though exception has been taken to some of the expressions and sentiments contained in the documents which were employed in this instance of covenant-renovation—and it may be freely admitted that, in some cases, there are grounds of objection—this should not hinder us from ascribing to the spirit and conduct of our illustrious forefathers the meed of our approval and admiration. They had escaped from a savage and relentless persecution—many of them having been in perils often—being despoiled of their worldly property, and having some of their dearest friends cut off by cruel persecutors. They were

grievously disappointed in the settlement that had taken place at the Revolution. When they beheld the rulers and people in the nation, and the National Church, evidently apostate from the principles which they so highly valued, and which had been purchased at such costly sacrifices, it is not to be wondered at, that they should have entertained strong views, and that in some instances they should have expressed themselves unguardedly. But it is undeniable that they exhibited an honest and fervent attachment to principles, which it was once Scotland's glory to profess before the world, and for adherence to which many of her noblest sons had willingly shed their blood.

Besides, there is no principle in the Auchinsaugh renovation which is not either contained in the original covenants, or which by plain inference may not be deduced from them. The *spirit* of the covenanters on that occasion was excellent; and the transaction in which they engaged was not only the seasonable performance of an important duty, but it also proved of singular benefit in subsequent times. In the words of a candid historian, we may say—"The Auchinsaugh renovation was an act, in which it would have been well if the whole body of Scottish Presbyterians had joined."¹ The National Covenants were by this transaction embodied in the *ecclesiastical profession* of a number who bound themselves thus in the most solemn manner to adhere to them, amidst all trials and sacrifices. The bond into which they voluntarily entered, was a happy means of preserving them from prevailing defection; and from the errors in doctrine and laxity in discipline which, as the natural fruit of apostasy from scriptural attainments, speedily overspread the Church of Scotland. It tended to give the faithful witnesses for a covenanted testimony full ecclesiastical organization; and to unite them in holy fellowship, and in exertions for the diffusion of the truth. The principles and spirit which they displayed they were honoured to transmit as a precious heritage to posterity; and there can be no doubt that, through succeeding generations, even to our own day, the witnesses for the royal prerogatives of Messiah the Prince, in this and other countries, have cherished a sense of the superadded obligation of federal engagements, from the conduct of their worthy ancestors; as their example has cheered them under privation and difficulties, and animated them to resolute steadfastness and perseverance, in maintaining the cause of Christ and advancing his kingdom.

¹ Hetherington's *History of Church of Scotland*, vol. ii. p. 266.

The next instance of covenant-renovation by those who adhered to the whole of the attainments of the Second Reformation, occurred more than *thirty years* afterwards. The Secession body, soon after its organization, engaged in an act of renewing the British covenants, by a bond adapted to their circumstances, accompanied by a confession of sins, containing an enumeration of public defections, and of prevailing sins, social, ecclesiastical, and personal. There can be no doubt that this measure proved beneficial in preserving evangelical doctrine and practical religion in that section of the Church, for a length of time, during the declension in piety and the irreligion that spread so widely throughout these countries, in the latter half of the last century. It served, besides, to call the attention of the nation to vows that were disregarded; and to valuable principles which, through the perfidy of rulers in the Church and State, had been consigned to oblivion. At the same time, it was seen and felt by those who owned the full obligation of the British covenants, and who had due regard to their original design, as the righteous compact between rulers and ruled, and as the basis of the national legislation and administration, that there was something defective and inconsistent in the act of the Seceders in renewing these covenants, while yet they incorporated with the national society, which was based on their rejection, and gave active support to men in power and authority, who were pledged by oath to systems diametrically opposed to the Covenanted Reformation.

The Reformed Presbytery was organized in 1743; and in 1745 there took place another public renovation of the covenants, by them and their adherents, in a manner similar to that at Auchinsaugh. The place at which the covenants were renewed on this occasion was *Crawford-John*. Although at the time this service was felt to be refreshing and invigorating, yet, owing to the circumstance that less preparation was made than the importance of the work demanded, and there was not so full a representation of the scattered adherents of the covenanted testimony as was desirable, and as no full and particular record of the proceedings was emitted, this instance of covenanting, in a few years, came to be less referred to among the members of the Reformed Presbyterian body, than that which had taken place soon after the Revolution.¹

¹ In the *Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church*, the following judicious observations, in relation to the duty of renewing the covenants, and to the new obligation arising from instances of covenant-renovation, are made in connection with the covenanting at *Crawford-John* :—

A period of more than a century elapsed from the renovation of the covenants at Crawford-John, until a similar transaction took place among the friends of the Covenanted Reformation in any part of these kingdoms. The latter half of the eighteenth century was a time of general declension throughout the British Churches. There was a wide-spread departure from the principles of the Protestant standards. The profession of evangelical truth was unpopular. Fundamental errors were zealously propagated and embraced by many. Lax and latitudinarian views respecting the fellowship of the Church generally prevailed. Godly practice was rare; and among the few who knew and professed the truth, little was done to arrest the progress of destructive errors, and nothing was attempted for the diffusion of the Gospel among those who lay beyond the pale of nominal Christianity. It need not be thought strange that, at such a period, the few scattered adherents of the Covenanted Reformation should not be seen assuming any prominent position in displaying a "banner for truth." They laboured amidst obloquy and discouragement to proclaim the Gospel in a limited sphere, and to preserve Divine ordinances pure from human additions and corruptions. They cultivated in retirement a holy fellowship, and exemplified a godly practice. It required no little watchfulness and effort to preserve themselves, and such as united with them, from being carried down by the tide of defection. Yet while we sympathize with our pious forefathers, in relation to their trials, in a period of general declension, and award them the praise of steadfastness in the

"As this was the last instance in which public covenants were renewed in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, we beg here to offer the following observations:—*1st*, That covenanting is an occasional duty, to be performed as the circumstances of the Church or of a nation may seem to demand; and that the permanent obligation of the covenants of these lands depends on their moral and scriptural character, rather than their being publicly recognized or renewed. *2d*, Yet we believe, that where a Church or people have been brought under the bond of such engagements, it is a duty warranted by reason and Scripture occasionally to renew them, as the aspects of Divine providence may require. *3d*, We believe that the defection of a great majority of a Church or nation from such covenants does not cancel their obligation; and that the call upon a minority, who adheres to them, to bring them up to remembrance, becomes the more urgent when the public acts of the majority have a tendency to bury them in oblivion. *4th*, We approve of the zeal and faithfulness which prompted our fathers to engage in this work at seasonable times, and admit that we are placed under superadded obligations to adhere to these covenants, in consequence of their deeds of renovation."—*Historical Part of Testimony*, pp. 187, 188.

faith, we cannot but think that more might have been attempted to hold up before the nation a faithful standard, to remind the Churches of the position from whence they had fallen, and to call them to repentance and the performance of first works.

There were certainly some occasions suffered to pass, when the call was loud and distinct, to renew former federal engagements, when a public measure of this kind might have been of singular advantage to the witnesses for truth themselves, and when it might have subserved important ends to others, in preserving from further defection, and in discovering to them the excellence of a faithful profession. Such calls to covenant-renovation were presented at the adoption of the first Judicial Testimony in 1761—afterwards when infidel and revolutionary principles spread extensively throughout the community at the close of the last century—and at the time when Synods of the Reformed Presbyterian Church were constituted in Scotland and Ireland. And, when the first *missionary* movements in the British Churches commenced, had the friends of the British covenants duly considered the principles of these sacred deeds, and faithfully renewed them, there can be little doubt that, notwithstanding their fewness and limited resources, they would have occupied the front rank in the grand attempt to “bring the king back,” and to render the nations subject to him, as his covenanted inheritance. When opportunities for doing good are suffered to pass unimproved, the progress of a righteous cause is retarded, and the Church becomes “as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers,” instead of a consecrated host advancing to new victories, or as a tabernacle, strengthening her stakes, and stretching forth the curtains of her habitation.

In the early part of the present century, the attention of the British Churches was called to the long-neglected covenants of our fathers, by the writings of several distinguished advocates of the truth. Their nature and continued obligation were fully exhibited; and they were ably vindicated against the objections, cavils, and misrepresentations of various writers who had vilified and reproached them, and of ecclesiastical bodies that had repudiated the principle of their descending obligation. The works of Mason, Paxton, M’Crie, Moorhead, Morrison, and Stevenson, did valuable service in bringing prominently into view the federal deeds that were once the glory of the British Churches and nation—in clearing away much groundless misrepresentation; and though these works did not explicitly

plead for the exemplification of the principle of covenanting by an express act of renovation, they yet presented the subject in such a light that numbers throughout the Church became more deeply impressed with the importance and value of the British covenants, as a bond of unity, and an approved means of revival and extension to the Church.

For some time, the matter of renewing the Covenants, National and Solemn League, in a bond suited to the condition of the Church, engaged the attention of the Supreme Judicatory of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland; and in 1822, there was emitted by its authority, a paper in overture, containing an act of covenant-renovation and a confession of sins,—the design being to lead the members of the Church to exemplify their profession by a solemn renovation of the covenants. The writer of this paper, which was at once comprehensive and appropriate, was the late venerable Professor Symington. It bears the impress of his enlightened sense of public duty, enlarged heart, and fervent piety. For some time after, this overture was under the consideration of the Synods of the Reformed Presbyterian Church both in Scotland and Ireland; but, from various causes, no steps were taken to carry out the design in an act of public renovation.

In the year 1830, Dr Alexander M'Leod of New York, well known by his works, and as an able advocate of the scriptural principles of civil and religious liberty, visited these countries. To the respective Synods of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland and Ireland, which he attended, and where his presence was hailed with cordial satisfaction, he proposed a plan of covenant-renovation for the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Britain and America, and for any others who might unite with them in the service; and he submitted the draught of a bond for this purpose. This proposal was gladly received by the friends of the covenanted reformation in these countries. The time was regarded as opportune for promoting a closer union and greater fraternal intercourse among the witnesses for the royal prerogatives of the Redeemer, and for taking more decisive measures for the advancement of the cause of truth and righteousness. The attempts of enemies admonished of approaching danger; and various steps of national defection seemed to call for the public protest of Christ's witnesses, and for a renewed exhibition of the only principles of national safety and blessing. One section of the Presbyterian body in Scotland, that which professed adherence to the testimony of

the "Original Seceders," had shortly before renewed the covenants in 1827, on the occasion of the union of the *Protesters* with the *Constitutional Presbytery*, and the emission of their testimony.

In 1829, the British Parliament had notoriously abandoned the great principle of the national covenants, in the passing of the act for *Roman Catholic Emancipation*, and for the admission of the sworn abettors of the Papacy to places of influence in the councils of the nation. However this measure was lauded by many as wise State policy, it could be viewed in no other light by the friends of scriptural truth and freedom, than as palpably opposed to the nation's solemn vows, and as fraught with imminent danger to the best interests, civil and religious, of the empire. The warnings which at the time were uttered by a few faithful men, and which were generally unheeded and despised, have since been sadly verified. The confusions which followed in the national councils, and throughout various parts of the community, and the concessions that have since been made to Popish claims, with the numerous perversions of persons of influence throughout the nation to Popery, have exhibited the proper fruits of this ill-fated measure; and it seems not unlikely that a still more bitter experience will hereafter attest the Divine displeasure against the nation for entering into a league with Antichrist. The plan of covenant-renovation proposed by Dr M'Leod, and received for consideration by the Reformed Synods in Britain, had not that measure of success which was at first anticipated. The draught of the bond for covenanting, though characterized by the comprehensive views and felicitous expressions which distinguish the writings of the venerable proposer, appeared, on careful consideration, to those who were most desirous of displaying a full covenanted standard for truth, of too general a nature, and as less explicit in relation to the application of some leading principles, than the interests of truth and the position of faithful witnesses demanded. This may have arisen from the avowed design of Dr M'Leod to engage others in the act of covenanting, besides those who were in the fellowship of the Reformed Presbyterian Church; and from the anticipation natural to sanguine minds, that others, attracted by an uplifted banner, would readily join in the same holy confederation. However desirable it would be to witness such a union among the friends of truth, all past experience serves to show, that it may not be expected, till men are brought by the power of Divine truth, and by a larger measure of the Spirit's influences,

to forsake connection with corrupt systems, whether civil or ecclesiastical. The witnesses for the crown rights of Messiah, and for the supremacy of the Word, will continue clothed in sackcloth, and must be contented to be few, poor, and limited in their influence, until the period of Antichrist's downfall, and till the nations submit to the sceptre of Immanuel.

Unhappily, too, divisions in the Church, which sprung up at the time, obstructed the progress of the work of covenant-*renovation*. After the draught of a bond for covenanting had been for some time under the consideration of the committees of the Reformed Synods in Scotland and Ireland, and was before the Church in America, a schism took place in the covenanting body in the American Republic, and divisions in sentiment in relation to various parts of the testimony occurred in the Church in Ireland. In the year 1833, a number of leading ministers of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in America abandoned the testimony which covenanting witnesses had always been understood to maintain against the unscriptural and immoral constitution of the United States. Though there is no clear evidence that Dr M'Leod sympathized with this movement, yet of those who were chiefly instrumental in promoting it, several were ministers of long standing in the Church, and had been long known as his intimate friends. It must be evident, that in such circumstances, the Church was not in a condition to engage heartily in the work of covenanting. Hence was it that faithful covenanting witnesses in America, tried with the defection from a martyr-testimony of those who seemed to be pillars, and called to contend earnestly against those who had formerly been brethren in the same common profession, were hindered from making a solemn public exhibition of their sense of the obligation of the federal deeds of their ancestors.

In the Church in Ireland, discussions respecting the extent of the *magistrate's power* in the matters of religion, and other collateral doctrines, which lasted for ten years, likewise hindered the work of covenant-*renovation*. While brethren were opposed to each other on subjects, not of minor importance, but on matters that had all along entered into the confessions and testimonies of faithful witnesses, it was plain that there was not that unity of principle, and that agreement of heart that are essential to entering into a covenant, which would embrace all former reformation-attainments, and avow a holy brotherhood. The painful separation which took place in

the Irish section of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, in the year 1840, placed a small number of ministers, some of them of long standing in the Church, and the people that adhered to them, under the pretence of enlarged *liberality*, in a position of antagonism to articles, which had always been thought to occupy a place in the testimonies and contendings of covenanted witnesses. Denying and opposing doctrines which were plainly involved in national covenanting, and which are explicitly declared in the British covenants, and accepting the praise and support of parties that were avowed and embittered enemies to the principles of these venerable deeds, they could not but be regarded as having made defection from valuable reformation-attainments, and their course was plainly disorderly and schismatic. The trials, internal and external, to which this melancholy division exposed the faithful adherents of a covenanted testimony, served to excite inquiry—test attachment to truths, which, though unpopular, were susceptible of extensive applications, and of great practical value—and to unite in firmer fraternal concord those who had been called to suffer reproach for the name's sake of Christ. Thus "the wrath of man" is frequently made to praise God; and the servants of Christ, after passing through the ordeal of conflict and affliction, are prepared to make a fuller display of a scriptural profession, and to devise and execute measures for its advancement. The defection from reformation-attainments of a number, the endurance of obloquy and opposition from the world during the progress of the discussions, and the necessity of taking measures to unite in closer fellowship the friends of truth, and to excite the Church to more vigorous exertions for maintaining and diffusing her testimony,—all pointed to the great duty of covenant-renovation as the best and most approved way of accomplishing these objects. When "the enemy comes in like a flood," a primary duty, as instruments in the hands of the Spirit, of faithful men, is to "lift up a standard against him." No standard appeared to be better suited for this purpose than that which had inscribed upon it—"For Christ's crown and covenant," that which had already been uplifted by holy hands, which had waved upon many a field of conflict and suffering, and which is destined yet to be the signal of universal triumph. The conviction that covenant-renovation was among the first steps that should be taken to resist defection, repair the breaches of Zion, and advance precious truth, was not only felt by some—ministers and elders, who had

been called to contend for truth—but appears also to have taken possession of prayerful and public-spirited persons, not a few, throughout the membership of the Church.

Accordingly, so soon as peace was restored to the courts of the Lord's house, a movement was made to resume the consideration of the duty of public covenanting. At the annual meeting of Synod in 1841—the first that occurred after the disruption—a petition was presented from the Session and members of the Reformed Presbyterian Congregation in Belfast, praying the Supreme Judicatory to take steps for the renovation of the covenants of our fathers, and assigning various weighty reasons for seeking the adoption of such a measure, among which were the necessity of promoting and exhibiting unity in sentiment and affection in the Church, and of displaying a testimony for truth, which others might be led to contemplate and embrace. This petition, which had evidently been framed by men who had rightly appreciated the wants of the time, and the peculiar duty of the Church, proved to be most opportune. It met with a ready response, in the appointment by Synod of a committee to prepare a plan of covenant-renovation; and at the next annual meeting, a number of similar petitions were presented from other congregations of the Church.

The proper **MODE** of renewing the British covenants by ministers and members of the Church, in an ecclesiastical capacity, formed a subject of grave consideration and interesting discussion. It was at once admitted, that the act of renovation could not possess the character of a national transaction; nor could those engaging in it assume to themselves the functions of representatives of the nation. At the same time, it was never doubted, that after the example of the people of God recorded in the Old Testament, and of covenanted witnesses, both in former and later times, it was competent to the Church to adapt the covenants, which, though originally national deeds, embodied principles of the most extensive application, to the circumstances of an ecclesiastical body, whose members were under the highest obligation to regulate all their relations with supreme regard to the authority of Christ the Lord, and to the ultimate standard of his Word. The principle which was assumed by the Synod as fundamental was, that all the great doctrines expressed in the Covenants, National and Solemn League, should have a place in the proposed act of renovation, none being overlooked, and that these were to be faithfully and

particularly applied to the existing state of the Church and of civil society. Keeping in view this principle, it became a matter of consideration whether the covenants should be taken, in the terms of the original documents, with certain marginal alterations, and a confession of sins, and engagement to duties, as has been done at *Auchensaugh* and *Crawford-John*; or whether the act of covenanting should be performed by means of a bond, suited to the circumstances of the Covenanters. After mature consideration, the latter method was adopted, as that which was fitted to exhibit most clearly the solemn vow of the Church, as witnessing for all precious truth formerly attained, and against all invasions of the Redeemer's royal prerogatives. Besides, it appeared obvious, that in the different instances of covenanting, at various times, whether recorded in Scripture, or in the uninspired annals of the Church, the covenant, though substantially the same, had undergone such alterations, as served to accommodate it to the circumstances of the Covenanters. The covenant taken in Nehemiah's days was in reality a bond, founded on the national covenant at Horeb, and binding to special duties, which were obligatory on the returned captives. The "engagement to duties," in the *Auchensaugh* transaction, besides, was plainly of the nature of a bond, exhibiting the principles of the national covenants, as applied to the state of the Church and nation, the evils to be confessed and forsaken, and the duties peculiarly required of witnesses for truth. The bond for covenant-renovation was so prepared as to embrace *all the matter of the original covenants*, National and Solemn League, and, as far as possible, the phraseology of these venerable documents. It was therefore seen at once to be the substance of the British covenants, accommodated to the Church's present obligations and duties, displaying a comprehensive exhibition of the principles of the testimony for truth which are morally unchangeable. The "Confession of Sins," too, contained a faithful protest against multiplied instances of covenant-violation; and an enlarged acknowledgment of sins, personal and social, which appeared to call for special humiliation, and which were calculated to provoke the Divine displeasure against the Church and nation.¹

¹ The Bond for Covenanting and the Confession of Sins, were at first presented in one paper. It was afterwards judged best to separate the Bond and the Confession. Various alterations were made in these papers, at the suggestion of the inferior judicatories, or by members of the Synod; and while the paper which was first offered presented the basis of what was

As it was designed from the first that the work of covenanting should be engaged in, not alone by the ecclesiastical judicatories, but also by the members of the Church, the proposal for covenant-renaissance was brought before the congregations of the Church ; and the bond and confession of sins were sent down in overture, for repeated consideration by the inferior judicatories. Though a delay of several years occurred in bringing to completion the measures for covenant-renaissance—and at times, those who were most desirous of seeing this good work essayed, felt concerned at the apparent slowness of progress—yet it was gratifying to observe the manner in which the God of our fathers opened the way of his people to the attainment of this high privilege. A large portion of the time of the judicatories, inferior and superior, was devoted to the consideration of federal vows, and the exercise was found to be solemnizing and profitable to the members. The subject of covenant-renaissance was frequently brought before the congregations and fellowship-meetings of the Church. The papers were carefully inspected, and there was gratifying and increasing evidence afforded that the matter had engaged the thoughts, and called forth the earnest prayers of the most pious members of the Church. The remarks and memorials presented by the inferior courts upon the overtures submitted to them, discovered, in many cases, an intimate and enlarged acquaintance with the vows and covenanted attainments of a former period, and an earnest and anxious concern that the Church should go forward in the public avouching of the God of their fathers.

At the meeting of Synod, held prior to that in which final arrangements were made for the work of covenanting, there was presented the expression of an earnest desire from a large majority of the congregations, that the work should forthwith be proceeded in, while from none was there any decided opposition to the measure. It was apparent that the Lord had disposed the hearts of his people to seek to honour Him in the way of covenant-obedience ; and stirred up many to regard the work of covenant-renaissance, not only as a paramount duty, but also as a high and most desirable privilege. There were, notwithstanding, some difficulties in the way of the performance of this important service ; and those who had all along taken a deep and prayerful interest in the matter, were not without

finally adopted, all pains were taken to make the documents as full and perspicuous as possible, preparatory to their being actually employed in the solemn work of covenant-renaissance.

fears and misgivings lest, on the one hand, aught should arise to prevent the Church going forward in a work to which there appeared to be so many loud and distinct calls ; and lest, on the other, there should be any engaging rashly or inconsiderately in the service. When the Synod held its usual annual meeting in Londonderry in July 1853, these fears were happily disappointed ; and in a manner, at once striking and unexpected, the way was opened up for carrying into accomplishment the design so long cherished, and for attaining the object so much desired. After the report of the committee that had been appointed to transmit the documents respecting covenant-renovation to the sessions and congregations of the Church was presented, and it became apparent that the mind of the Church generally was eagerly bent on going forward in the work of covenanting, the ministers and elders entered with much interest into the consideration of the case. Light beamed upon the path of the Lord's servants. A spirit of remarkable cordiality and devotedness appeared to pervade the assembly, betokening the presence of the God of their fathers with those who took hold of his covenant, and giving cheering indication that He was about to return to Zion with mercies. The judgment of the different members of Synod was given with much solemnity, and under the impression of the momentous nature of the duty contemplated. Entire unanimity prevailed ; and in a spirit of fervent love, and deep humility and holy joy, it was resolved to adopt measures for essaying without delay the solemn duty. All felt a special elevation of heart upon the occasion. Thanks were publicly rendered to the King who dwells in Zion, for the abundant tokens of his covenant-favour ; and there was realized in a greater measure than the members present had ever hitherto witnessed in the courts of the sanctuary, a season of reviving and refreshment from the Lord's presence.

A committee for arrangements afterwards reported a plan of covenant-renovation, which was unanimously adopted. It was agreed that the covenants should first be renewed by the Synod, by means of the bond that had been adopted, and that when this shall have been done, steps shall be taken to extend the work throughout the different congregations of the Church.¹ A special meeting of Synod was appointed to be held for this purpose on Tuesday the 11th, and Wednesday the 12th of October next. The place selected was Dervock, a village in

¹ See Appendix.

County Antrim, it being in the neighbourhood of a number of the congregations, and a central locality for the Church.

As the time for holding this meeting drew near, the work was regarded with increasing solemnity by the ministers, elders, and members of the Church. In the devotional services of the sanctuary, societies, and families, there was frequent and special reference to the important service in prospect; and the Lord's gracious presence and countenance were earnestly sought for his servants, who were called to go before others in entering anew, and in a manner which they had not heretofore essayed, into solemn covenant engagements. The spirit of grace and supplication seemed, to a considerable extent, to rest upon the Church; and there was cheering evidence afterwards that these prayers came before God, even into his temple; and that, in answer to them, there descended "showers of blessing."

Meeting of Synod for Covenant-Renovation.

At the time and place appointed, the Synod convened for the work of covenant-renovation. There was a full attendance of members, with the exception of a very few ministers, who, through age and infirmities, or necessary engagements, were absent. There were, besides, present several licentiates, and a number of ruling elders, who, though not members of Synod, desired to take part in the act of covenanting; and a large concourse of members of the Church, some from remote parts of this country, and several from Scotland—all coming with apparent earnest desire, to seek communion with the God of their fathers and his servants, in sealing their allegiance to Zion's King.

The following is a condensed account of the interesting proceedings on this memorable occasion:—

On Tuesday, the 11th October, the members of Synod, ministers and elders, assembled in the Reformed Presbyterian Church, near Dervock, at 11 o'clock A.M., this having been appointed to be observed as a day of special fasting and prayer, with a view to the work of covenanting. The Synod was constituted by the moderator, the Rev. Thomas Houston, D.D. The Rev. Robert Wallace, of Newry, by unanimous appointment, acted as clerk *pro tempore*. The stated clerk was prevented from attending the meeting, from his having been called to

dispense public ordinances at a lengthened distance. Arrangements were first made respecting the order of the services. The Synod unanimously agreed to admit Mr James Renwick Thompson, a licentiate of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, from the United States, America, who submitted certificates of standing and character, to the act of covenanting. The devotional exercises of the day were then proceeded with, which were characterized throughout with impressive solemnity.

At 12 o'clock noon, Rev. Robert Wallace commenced with prayer, and explained, in brief and appropriate terms, Psalm cii., from the 10th to the 19th verse. The moderator afterwards preached on the great duty of confessing and repenting of sin, as a necessary preparation for the work of covenanting. His discourse was founded on Daniel ix. 4, 5—“*And I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love Him, and to them that keep his commandments; we have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments.*” From this text there were illustrated, with considerable fulness—First, *The character of the glorious Being to whom we approach, making confession of sin.* After referring to the manner in which God is to be approached in penitential prayer, the OBJECT of worship was spoken of as *our own covenant God—as all-powerful and terrible to execute vengeance, as ever-remembering and faithfully performing all covenant-engagements, and as rich in mercy to a remnant left.* Secondly, *The import of the confession, with special application to the Synod, and people assembled, was considered.* The characteristics of approved confession of sins, as exemplified by the prophet, were first shown; and then, at considerable length, the sins to be specially confessed were exhibited—as *those of a professed Christian people enjoying distinguishing privileges, the sins of the ministry and eldership, the transgressions of covenanted witnesses, and manifold sins, in spirit and conduct, against others in the land.* Thirdly, it was shown *how penitents are enabled in sincerity and truth to make such a confession.* Among the views suggested, were a *minute and particular searching of our own ways, a solemn sense of God's presence, the agency of the Holy Spirit, looking to Christ as pierced by our sins, careful observance of tokens of the Divine displeasure upon the Church and the land, and heartfelt dread of the fearful consequences of dealing perfidiously with God.*

Several suitable inferences and directions were presented in the conclusion ; and solemn appeals were addressed to the hearts and consciences of the hearers.

After praise and prayer, the Rev. William Russel read the "*confession of sins*," that had been adopted by Synod.¹ After reading this paper, Mr Russel delivered an impressive address, in which he adverted to a number of the most solemn and important matters contained in the confession of sins, and specially referred to some of the evils from which the British nation and Churches might have been saved, had the principles of the covenanted reformation been faithfully maintained. He made particular mention in this connection of the mediatorial dominion of Christ, as sole King of Zion and the Governor among the nations, and the independence of his Church. He guarded against the supposition that, in referring to the period of the Second Reformation, Covenanters should be considered as believing the attainments then reached to have been perfect, and that nothing beyond them is to be attained. It is a *comparative excellence* only which covenanted witnesses ascribe to it. He stated, moreover, that it is more in sorrow than in anger that we faithfully point out what we believe to be great evils in the constitution and administration of these lands. It is not in a hostile spirit towards the rulers of our beloved native land, many of whom are endowed with gifts and possessed with qualities which excite our admiration, and engage our affectionate regards. While we should always study to maintain supreme loyalty to the King of kings, we would not fail, in the spirit of apostolic advice, to ask for enlightenment and saving grace for such as fill responsible and influential stations. The attention of fathers and brethren was then directed to some of the sins of ministers and elders, which should be causes of special humiliation. He dwelt particularly on the exceeding sinfulness of sin—its effects, its demerit, as eminently seen in the cross of Christ, and he exhorted all to look to Him whom their sins had pierced, and mourn for Him. The *kind of confession* which we should aim at was then pointed out ; and the address was concluded with some suitable observations on the importance of such confession, as a step of preparation for covenanting. Mr Russel afterwards offered up, on behalf of the members of Synod and assembly, solemn prayer, in which he referred to the various subjects contained in the "*confession*," and earnestly implored forgiveness for the Church and the land of manifold

¹ See Appendix.

and aggravated transgressions. A holy dread of the Divine Majesty penetrated the hearts of many of the worshippers, and yet they felt that it was surely good to draw near to God as humble penitents.

The concluding part of the service of this day was a discourse by the Rev. Robert Nevin, of Londonderry, founded on Genesis xxxv. 2—“*Put away the strange gods that are among you, and be clean, and change your garments,*” &c. In the illustration, he noticed—First, Some of the *spiritual idols that are to be relinquished*, in order to an acceptable approach to God; and secondly, *The manner in which this important duty is to be performed*. Spiritual idols were referred to, under the heads of self—the world—inordinate desires of the flesh and of the mind—formalism, hypocrisy, lukewarmness—making idols of means of grace and religious ordinances. Such evils are to be mortified and put away, in the spirit of true repentance, with strong faith, under abiding impressions of our own insufficiency for aught that is good—in dependence upon the sovereign grace of God, in joyful hope, with fervent zeal, and with a steadfast and constant spirit. Various evils in the Church were faithfully pointed out; and the discourse was characterized by the exhibition of a pointed testimony for truth, clear exposition of Scripture statements, and suitable practical directions, in relation to the duty contemplated.

On Wednesday, the second day of meeting, and that which had been fixed for covenant-renovation, the Synod first employed a short session in ascertaining those who were to join in the act of covenanting, and in settling the order of procedure. A number of ruling elders from various congregations, who had been certified by their respective sessions, were declared to be eligible. Among these was *Mr John Beattie*, of New Alexandria, Pennsylvania, from the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America, who was cordially admitted.

The Rev. James Smyth commenced the public services of the day by prayer, and explaining, in appropriate terms, a portion of the 20th Psalm. The Rev. James Dick then preached on the nature and obligations of religious covenants, from Nehemiah ix. 38—“*And because of all this we make a sure covenant, and write it; and our princes, Levites, and priests, seal unto it.*” From this subject, he illustrated at considerable length, and with much fulness and convincing argument—First, *The nature of the covenant*. Here he showed that covenanting is no sectarian practice, that God has never dealt with the

human family but in the way of covenanting,—that in all ages and countries vowing and covenanting have been practised,—that there is a clear and express warrant for the duty, both from the light of nature and from the Sacred Scriptures; that covenanting is in its nature moral, and not confined to any one region or people; and that the *matter* of a scriptural covenant is the most important that can be conceived. This he spoke of as a profession of belief in all revealed truth, as a cordial reliance on Divine promises, as an engagement to walk in the instituted means of grace, and to perform all required duties. It was then shown, that our Covenants, National and Solemn League, are, in substance, none other than the covenant by which God's Church has been bound in every age. Secondly, *The making of the covenant* was considered. This was illustrated in the following observations:—God himself, first of all, made his people's covenant. Had He not made it, they would have no right to enter into it. Man's making a covenant with God is just his acceptance of God's covenant. Persons in different offices and stations are the persons who covenant; and in making the covenant, all proper formality and solemnity are to be observed. Thirdly, *The reasons* for covenanting were then clearly and forcibly exhibited. Of these the following were noticed—1. To put away all iniquity. 2. To walk before God in obedience to the moral law given to Moses. 3. Remembering manifold oppressions, in the hope that God would bless them, giving them grace to support trials, and that He would in due time grant them deliverance. Various *instances* of covenanting, mentioned in the Old and New Testaments, and among the Reformed Churches in different countries, were then considered, and the *occasions* on which faithful men betook themselves to this great duty were noticed. The *special call* to the Church at the present time to renew the covenant of their fathers was next pointed out. This was viewed as furnished by *defection* from covenanted attainments in the Churches, and the active *and untiring efforts of enemies* against the cause of God. The British covenants are a tried barrier against the inroads of adversaries. The very treatment which our fathers' covenants have received supplies a powerful reason for publicly acknowledging them. At all times when the covenant has been renewed in a proper spirit, God has approved of the transaction, and visibly owned those who engaged in it. In conclusion, *the frame of spirit* in which we should covenant with God was considered, as consisting in

reverence of the Divine Majesty, deep self-abasement, dependence on God, appropriating faith, the exercise of holy joy, the engagement of the heart and conscience to be God's for ever, and humble anticipation that God will bless us hereafter. This able discourse, which abounded in clear exposition of Scripture, convincing argument and faithful testimony-bearing, was listened to with profound and sustained attention by the large assembly, and appeared to make a deep impression, not only upon those who were immediately to engage in the act of covenanting, but likewise upon all who were present.

After a brief recess, the Rev. Dr Stavely, who had been appointed to preside in the work of covenanting, ascended the pulpit, and, after praise and prayer, called upon the Rev. William Toland to read aloud the National Covenant of Scotland, and the Rev. William M'Carroll to read the Solemn League and Covenant. This being done, the ministers and elders proposing to join in the act, who were ranged in seats in the aisle, immediately before the pulpit, stood up; and Dr Stavely read, in a solemn and distinct manner, the *act of covenant-renovation*, as contained in a bond, embodying the substance of the Covenants, National and Solemn League, adapted to the circumstances of the Church and the present times. At each separate numbered paragraph, he lifted up his right hand, in token of swearing to the matters contained in the bond, and at the same time, all the ministers and elders likewise elevated their right hands, to signify their cordial joining in the same engagement; and at the close, all together pronounced a solemn and emphatic AMEN. The swearing of the covenant being finished, Dr Stavely descended from the pulpit, and affixed his signature to the bond, which had been carefully engrossed on a roll of parchment; and all the ministers, elders, and licentiates who had sworn the bond, followed, severally attaching their names to the paper. Dr Stavely then briefly addressed the assembly, speaking with special commendation of the becoming conduct and devout attention of the people who were witnesses of the transaction. The scene was indeed very striking and impressive, forcibly reminding one of some of those favoured occasions in which our Presbyterian forefathers publicly pledged their allegiance to Zion's covenanted King. The day was calm and delightful, the sun breaking forth with mellow splendour about the time the discourse on covenanting was commenced, and continuing to shed his beams upon the house of worship and surrounding

grounds, and to gladden the assembly, till he sunk beneath the horizon. The dense congregation, consisting, besides those in the neighbourhood, of many friends of the covenanted cause who had come from remote distances, and even of several brethren from Scotland, remained immovable in their seats for many hours; and appeared, at different parts of the service, penetrated by deep devotional feelings. When the ministers and elders stood up and swore the covenant, many of the spectators shed tears; and as they came forward to append their signatures, the act was witnessed with breathless attention. It was as if all felt that God was among his people of a truth; and that an act had been performed, which tended to elevate and spiritualize the minds of all, and whose happy results would extend far beyond the present service into future generations.

In the evening, the Rev. Samuel Simms preached from Psalm lxxvi. 11—“*Vow, and pay unto the Lord your God.*” In discussing this subject, he considered—First, The *doctrines* which those who had covenanted had sworn to keep, and the *practice* which they had sworn to observe. These doctrines were viewed as *scriptural, evangelical, Protestant, Presbyterian, and covenanting*. Of *duties* were particularly specified, *reading the Word and secret prayer, family and social worship, public worship, all relative duties, and the diffusion of truth*. The *reasons* why we should pay solemn vows were next exhibited. Our profession is scriptural, our privileges a blood-bought inheritance, our cause a covenanted cause; the past history of the world shows the importance of this cause, and the faithful maintenance of it is conducive to the glory of God, the good of our own souls, and the benefit of our native land. The *manner* in which we are to maintain Christ’s cause was finally exhibited. We are required to hold it forth in its integrity, in sincerity, zealously, unitedly, in charity, perseveringly, against all opposition, and till death. The discourse contained a clear and faithful testimony in behalf of precious truth, and many striking illustrations; and was concluded with suitable exhortations and directions, addressed to those who had renewed solemn vows, and to all who were present.

The public religious services of this memorable day were concluded about seven o’clock in the evening. Amidst the solemn calm of the closing day, the large assembly that had waited upon them for so many hours, with fixed attention, retired from the scene, under impressions of the peculiar favour of the God of their fathers, vouchsafed upon the occasion.

Immediately after the work of covenanting, the Synod made arrangements for extending the renewal of the Church's sacred vows to the various congregations. The committee on covenanting was instructed to prepare and publish, with as little delay as possible, a narrative of the Synod's proceedings in the matter of covenant-renovation; to print documents for the benefit of the members of the Church, and to address to sessions and congregations such hints and directions as would aid them in this important work. The Synod's expressed design, from its first proposal to renew the covenants, was that, as the whole membership of the Church had solemnly professed their belief in the perpetual obligation of these federal deeds, so they should enjoy the privilege of declaring this in the most explicit manner, by engaging in an act of public renovation. This they considered as clearly warranted, alike by the practice of faithful witnesses in former times, and especially by that of covenanting forefathers, and by the matter of the covenants themselves. The duties to which they bind are moral, and thus plainly obligatory upon persons in every relation. And the renewal of scriptural covenants, which were at first *national* in their form, by Church courts, and members of the Church, so far from interposing an obstacle to the nation returning to a sense of its solemn vows, is an eminent means of promoting this great object. It raises up a standard for despised truth. When a nation has cast off its allegiance to Messiah the Prince, and perseveres in a course of covenant-violation, the appearance of even a few faithful ones assembled to avouch their Lord to be their covenant God is fitted to arrest attention; to recall others from backsliding, and to show the value of a faithful testimony. The spirit of the Lord lifting up a standard against the enemy coming in as a flood, is the divinely-appointed means of effectually staying his progress, and of leading to his eventual overthrow. It is the Church's appropriate province and work to bear witness for neglected truth, and to essay the performance of important public duties; and her doing so has frequently been the means of awakening civil communities to a due sense of solemn engagements, and of recalling them to the way of holy obedience. With such views, the Synod sought to enlist the people under their care in the same service of covenant-renovation. When they resolved on engaging first in the work, in a synodical capacity, they sought this as a high privilege for themselves; but likewise, at the same time, as an encouragement and example to the

flock entrusted to them; and they aimed to bring the whole people, for whose welfare and advancement in holiness they were deeply concerned, to join themselves also to the Lord, in a perpetual covenant never to be forgotten. Their desire was to see the Church thus presenting the aspect of a peculiar people, dedicating themselves anew to the Lord, shining forth, as an example to other Churches, in "the beauty of holiness," and bringing forth abundantly the precious fruits of covenant-obedience. The act of synodical covenanting was followed by happy effects throughout the Church. The ministers and elders felt themselves united more closely in the bonds of a holy brotherhood, and were prepared for more vigorous efforts and greater sacrifices for the advancement of precious truths. The people, encouraged by the exhortations and examples of those who had the spiritual oversight of them, were excited to a higher measure of devotedness in maintaining and advancing the testimony of Christ.

The Committee, soon after the meeting of Synod, issued a paper, containing suitable directions for the work of covenant-
renovation in congregations;¹ and not a few betook themselves to serious and special preparation for the early performance of the great duty.

The preparatory services which preceded the work of congregational covenanting were calculated to be of singular benefit to the Church. They discovered a deep sense, generally entertained, of the great solemnity and importance of the work, and an earnest concern for the Divine presence and acceptance, with the fervent desire likewise that the occasion might prove a time of revival and refreshing from the Lord's presence, and might be followed by permanent and salutary results. The spirit of prayer was largely poured out. The ministers in their public ministrations, frequently directed the attention of the congregations to the nature and obligations of scriptural covenants, and to the frame of spirit in which the work should be performed, and exhibited motives and encouragements to the duty. The work of covenanting frequently became the subject of spiritual converse and united prayer in the fellowship-meetings. The people were warned against engaging in the service in a

¹ These directions were carefully considered by the several sessions; and while, in one or two points, some sessions adopted a slightly different method in the practical performance of the solemn service, they were, in general, readily adopted, and were found to be of much use in carrying forward the work.—See Appendix.

formal or unconcerned manner, and were exhorted not to offer any part of the vow without a full understanding of its meaning and a sense of its obligation. The ministers and elders visited the different societies, and conversed with individuals, for the purpose of explaining the documents, and obviating objections. The members of the Church were put upon the work—most important and useful at all times—of searching the Scriptures and examining the history of the Church, to ascertain the way in which God had led his faithful people, in former times, to enter into covenant with Him ; to learn the special call to the duty, and to gather direction and encouragement for its performance. It is believed that, during the months that preceded the renovation of the covenants, more was done to revive the knowledge of the principles of the Church's testimony, and the spirit of faithful confessors, than had been accomplished for many years before. There were, moreover, indications, not a few, that these means of instruction were attended with the blessing from on high. It was gratifying to observe, in almost every instance, that as the period drew near in which congregations were actually to engage in the work of covenanting, difficulties disappeared, and a spirit of deep solemnity, and of delightful harmony and fraternal affection, seemed to pervade the people. The Lord opened up the path of his servants. Darkness became light before them, and crooked places were made straight. In some instances, a much larger number of young persons and others, than had been admitted at communions previously, sought the fellowship of the Church in congregations, before the act of covenanting took place, under the view of the importance of the privilege, and the impression that they would not enjoy a similar opportunity again during their lives.

The first congregation that engaged in the work of covenant-renovation, pursuant to the directions of Synod, was that of Kellswater. It was befitting that this, one of the oldest congregations of the covenanted Church in this country, and that had always been distinguished by high privileges and by steadfast attachment to the testimony of Christ, should take a leading position in this important movement. From the first, the elders and people manifested entire unanimity and cordiality in the matter, and the performance of the duty was accomplished with abundant tokens of Divine direction and blessing. The various services connected with the work of covenanting in this congregation were performed in the following manner.

According to the directions of the Synod's committee, a Sabbath of preparation and a day of special fasting and humiliation were publicly observed by the congregation, in a manner that bore a resemblance to the services preparatory to the celebration of the Lord's Supper. On the Sabbath preceding that on which the congregation renewed the covenants, a lecture was delivered by the pastor, on Joshua xxiv. 14-18, and afterwards the National Covenant of Scotland was read. In the afternoon the minister preached on Joshua xxiv. 19, and then the Solemn League and Covenant was read. The Friday following was observed by the congregation as a day of public fasting and humiliation. On this occasion, a lecture was delivered from Daniel ix. 3-9; and as an illustration of verse 5th, a part of the "Confession of Sins" was read. The afternoon discourse was founded on Jeremiah xi. 10, and the remaining part of the "Confession" was read. The session was then constituted, the terms of communion declared, and the "Act of Covenant-Renovation" read, and then tokens of admission to the ordinance of covenanting were dispensed. On Sabbath, April 2d, the congregation assembled for the great work of renewing the covenant of the God of their fathers. The pastor conducted the introductory exercises by offering up solemn prayer, commenting briefly in a suitable and practical manner on Leviticus x. 3, and explaining Psalm ciii. 13-19. After praise and prayer, the Rev. Thomas Houston, D.D., preached on Joshua xxiv. 15, illustrating from this subject, at considerable length, the *nature, obligation, and privileges* of public covenanting, and the *spirit* in which the service is to be performed. A brief interval followed. Before its expiration, the members of the congregation who proposed to take part in the work of covenanting, ranged themselves in the seats in front of the pulpit and on each side of it; and the pastor, after prayer and praise, delivered an address, detailing the steps that had been taken by the Church, with reference to this special duty, and offering various suitable scriptural directions and encouragements on the subject. The tokens were collected by the elders during the celebration of praise. The whole congregation then stood up worshipping God; and the pastor, from the pulpit, administered the oath to the covenanters, each individual lifting up his right hand at the close of each numbered section of the bond; and at the conclusion of the whole, all individuals covenanting pronounced an audible Amen. About *two hundred and twenty* persons in all,

a few of whom were very aged, and some in early youth, with much solemnity and readiness, engaged in the act of covenanting. After the swearing of the covenant by the congregation, the minister and an elder, or a member from each fellowship-meeting of the congregation, publicly subscribed the bond, and it was announced that the signing should afterwards be completed in the different societies. The pastor delivered a parting address, and the public services were concluded with prayer and praise by Mr James Renwick Thompson, licentiate of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in North America. The day was remarkably fine, and everything within and without the house of worship was calculated to impress the mind with the conviction that the covenant God of his people was manifesting his special favour and blessing upon this solemn occasion.

Other congregations followed this good example, more or less speedily, as they could make arrangements for this purpose. All that engaged in it took pains previously to be fully instructed in the nature of the duty, and to have objections and scruples obviated; and they came forward to the act of covenanting with much apparent solemnity and cordiality. As the manner of performing the service in different places was similar, it is unnecessary to detail the proceedings in each particular case. In several instances, it was deemed most suitable to connect the work of covenanting with the dispensation of the Lord's Supper; and while the preparatory services were attended to, on the other days that are observed at such a season, the act of covenant-renovation was reserved for the last day of the sacramental feast, and was found to form an appropriate and very impressive conclusion of the holy solemnity. Several congregations of the Church that were destitute of fixed pastors, expressed the desire to enjoy the same privilege as their brethren elsewhere. This was readily granted by the Presbyteries under whose care they were placed; and after pains had been taken to instruct them in the nature and design of the work, they too experienced a season of public dedication to be a time of refreshment and revival. In one instance, that of Loughmulvin, a part of Bready congregation, lying remote from the rest, the members sought and obtained a separate administration of the ordinance of covenant-renovation. In these instances, it was highly gratifying to observe, that the vacant congregations engaged in the work with equal, if not with even greater readiness than their more favoured brethren, who enjoyed a stated ministry. In some cases, it was testified that not a single

member who could possibly attend, was absent from the public assembly at the time of renewing the covenant, or refrained from taking part in the service. This good work was carried forward so successfully throughout the Church, that at the meeting of Synod in 1855, it was reported, that in all the Presbyteries a large majority of the congregations had then covenanted. Some that were prevented by the death of ministers, and other causes, from coming forward, have essayed the same service since. A very few have been hitherto hindered, from the advanced age or infirmities of their pastors. More than *two-thirds* of the whole congregations have already taken part in this important movement; while a congregation in England in connection with the Synod, and the missionaries and their flocks in the British North American Colonies, have manifested a readiness to take part in the public and explicit acknowledgment of the brotherly covenant.

To the praise of the grace and faithfulness of Zion's King, it deserves to be recorded that, in all the steps of preparation that were taken for covenanting in the various congregations, as well as in the solemn service itself, there was experienced no obstruction internal or external. There was "no breaking in or going out," there was "no complaining in our streets;" and it was felt by not a few that "*happy, indeed, is that people whose God is the Lord.*" While all that took part in the work of avouching the God of their fathers to be their God, were impressed with a deep sense of the greatness and importance of the duty, there was abundant evidence of the Lord's gracious presence with his people, dispelling fears, laying enemies under an arrest, strengthening his servants, and making them glad with the light of his countenance. Ministers and faithful elders, who looked forward to the work with anxious solicitude, enjoyed comfort and enlargement in solemn dedication, as they had manifold tokens of prayer being answered, and as they saw their people willingly offering themselves to the Lord. It furnished a refreshing and animating remembrance of seasons of covenanting and blessings that were vouchsafed to their fathers; and it afforded a bright prospect of times of promised enlargement to Zion, when all shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest, when through the plentiful effusion of the Spirit, "One shall say, I am the Lord's; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel."¹

¹ Isaiah xlv. 5.

CHAPTER VI.

THE EFFECTS OF COVENANT-RENOVATION—SPECIAL DUTIES INCUMBENT ON COVENANTERS.

THAT the faithful renewal of religious covenants has, in all past ages, been followed by salutary results, is attested by the whole history of God's people. Such an act implies repentance for former neglect and apostasy, the exercise of faith in God as a covenant God and Portion, the dedication of the heart and life to Him, and an unfeigned purpose to walk before Him in all holy obedience. A return to the Most High is the fruit of Divine favour, and has ever been accompanied by tokens of Divine acceptance and blessing. Seasons of covenanting have been distinguished as times when the progress of backsliding was arrested, and enemies restrained. They have been eras of abounding purity, peace, and comfort in the fellowship of the Church ; of earnest inquiry, of increased effort for the diffusion of truth, and of enlargement to Zion. Thus it was in the brightest periods of the history of God's ancient people, as in the days of Joshua, Asa, Hezekiah, and Josiah. In the *covenanting times* of our fathers, as at the close of the sixteenth century, at the commencement of the Second Reformation, and in the days of the Westminster Assembly, the blessings that flow from federal dedication were abundantly enjoyed. Plentiful showers of the Spirit descended to water the Lord's weary heritage. Our land was "married to the Lord," and was truly a land "delighted in." Sacred predictions declare that enlarged blessings shall be the fruit of public vowing in the latter period of the Christian economy. When "five cities in the land of Egypt" swear to the Lord, "in that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land : whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance."¹ When the Spirit is poured out, as water on the thirsty, and "floods on the dry ground," and one

¹ Isaiah xix. 24, 25.

and another joyfully profess, "I am the Lord's," there is remarkable spiritual increase—"They shall spring up as among the grass, as willows by the water courses." And when the captives returning from Babylon excite and encourage each other to join themselves to the Lord in "a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten," enemies are brought down and confounded, and with joyful praise the servants of God exclaim, "The Lord hath brought forth our righteousness: come, and let us declare to Zion the work of the Lord our God."¹

The instance of covenant-renovation which has been narrated in the preceding pages, has been already productive of various observable beneficial effects, which are worthy of distinct record, as illustrating the divinely established connection of the blessing from on high resting upon a return to the way of holy obedience. That the gracious results are not more marked and numerous, is to be ascribed to the weakness of faith, and the want of a spirit of heartfelt devotedness, which should flow from covenanting. Yet enough has been already enjoyed to show that the Lord has "remembered his covenant" for good to his people, and to encourage the expectation that He shall yet confer blessings more abundant upon those that have willingly avouched Him to be their God, and have vowed to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments always.

Of the salutary effects that have followed the act of covenanting by the *Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland*, we may briefly notice the following:—

1. *Greater steadfastness in the Church in maintaining a testimony for the truth.* Prior to the time when the Church's attention began to be called to the work of covenant-renovation, the hearts of the faithful were grieved by various instances of defection from a covenanted standard. Brethren that had once walked with us turned aside, and made a schism in the Church. Several in the ministry, and licentiates and students, were induced to enter into other ecclesiastical connections that promised them greater worldly support and emolument. Of the members of the Church, some were in danger of being led astray by the political movements of the day. The spirit of the age, shown in undervaluing important principles of a scriptural testimony, and urging to union in the Church on the compromise of truth, misled others. While such movements were going forward, there were leading men in some of the larger ecclesiastical communities that did not conceal their sanguine expectation

¹ Jeremiah l. 5; li. 10.

that, in a short time, the whole covenanting Church would abandon their peculiar position; and would fully say a confederacy with them. The times were ominous of radical changes. Certain public measures, such as political reform, and national education by the State, and the adoption, in some sort, of the Westminster standards, and the rejection of Erastian control, by large sections of the Presbyterian Church in this country, and in Scotland, with their increased exertions in the cause of Church extension, and in that of Christian missions at home and abroad, all tended to lead professed covenanting witnesses to relinquish their peculiar position; and by fraternizing with others, to adopt a course that would conduct to popularity and worldly favour; and which held out the prospect of enlargement and increased usefulness. Such views were calculated to form a powerful temptation, and there is little doubt that they operated upon the minds of not a few who made defection from former covenanted attainments. They are, however, unscriptural and illusory. Our solemn duty at all times is, as declared by the apostle, "*Whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule: let us mind the same things.*" From regard to the authority of Zion's King, for their own sakes, and to benefit others, faithful witnesses are required to "keep the Word of Christ's patience;" and to "hold fast" what they have, as they would be kept in "the hour of temptation." Even in the reforms that in recent times have taken place in ecclesiastical bodies, in which we should sincerely rejoice, there are important principles respecting the Redeemer's royal prerogatives, and the supremacy of his law, which are overlooked; and there are scriptural duties and usages wholly neglected. By unfurling and publicly displaying a standard for truth, and continuing to maintain a distinct separation from corrupt systems, civil and ecclesiastical, Christ's witnesses may hope to bring others fully to embrace the truth, and to hasten the bright consummation, when "*the Lord shall be King over all the earth,*" "*when there shall be one Lord, and his name one.*"

The act of covenant-renovation tended to foster deeply in the minds of those who engaged in it a sense of the value of the principles of the testimony of Christ, and to bind them to their faithful maintenance and general diffusion. The peculiar tenets and usages of covenanted witnesses were clearly seen to be no sectarian dogmas, nor to be of mere temporary or local interest. They are fundamental principles of universal concern-

ment, and susceptible of the most extensive application. Already had the great articles of a testimony for truth prevailed over error and opposition. They had been sealed by the blood of many faithful confessors; and the predictions of sacred writ assure us of their future glorious triumph. Those who renewed the covenant regarded it as their honour and privilege to profess and firmly maintain these imperishable truths. Their purpose was declared as they vowed to the God of their fathers to hold fast his truth, and to continue steadfast in his ways: "*So will we not go back from thee: quicken us, and we will call upon thy name.*"¹ The course of defection has been arrested; and there is reason to believe that many, feeling the weight of their renewed sacred engagements, are firmly resolved, at whatever cost or allurements, to maintain Christ's cause without wavering.

2. *A higher measure of brotherly love has been apparent throughout the Church.* To cultivate the spirit of fraternal affection and sympathy, and to manifest it by mutual reasonable counsel and support, was one distinct pledge given in the covenant. The effect of this solemn engagement has already been perceived in the delightful harmony and unanimity that have characterized the courts of the Lord's house, and in the spirit of concord prevailing in the membership of the Church. A more active sympathy, too, with brethren in trial, and a more ready response to the calls of Christian benevolence, indicate the revival of the spirit of primitive Christianity. The increase and wider diffusion of this spirit will prove the internal strength of the Church. Its prevalence will furnish the Saviour's grand test of genuine discipleship—"Hereby shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." And it will ultimately be a main instrumentality for converting the world to the acknowledgment of the truth of our holy religion, and to attract them to the fellowship of the Church—"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou has sent me."²

3. *Increased exertions for the spread of the truth, and the revival of practical godliness, have resulted from covenant-dedication.* The recent act of covenanting assigned a prominent place to efforts for the spiritual observance of religious ordinances, for the conversion of Jew and Gentile, and for the diffusion of a faithful testimony. The Covenanters thus vow—"We solemnly

¹ Psalm lxxx. 18.

² John xvii. 21.

engage, by our prayers, pecuniary contributions, and personal exertions, to seek the revival of true religion, and the conversion of Jews and Gentiles; that men, both in their individual and national capacity, may submit themselves to the Redeemer, that men may be blessed in Him, and all nations call Him blessed." There has already been gratifying evidence afforded that this part of our sacred vow has been felt, in its constraining obligation on the hearts and consciences of many. The petition "*Thy kingdom come,*" occupying, as it does, a prominent place in the Saviour's model of prayer, has come to be regarded as obliging to vigorous and sustained exertions, and to the consecration of worldly substance for the evangelization of the nations. Since the renewal of the covenants, a mission to the Romanists of Ireland has been originated or revived in the Church. A missionary has been ordained for this special work, and a catechist, a convert from Popery, who is qualified to give instructions in the Irish language, has been employed. Two most important stations have been occupied—one in the metropolis, and the other in an interesting district in the west of Ireland. Though it is yet "a day of small things" in this important mission, it is matter of rejoicing that the Church has betaken herself to the performance of one chief work, contemplated in the British covenants—namely, the extirpation of Popish error and delusion from these covenanted lands. The spirit of fervent prayer cherished with special reference to this mission, and the engagement of a greater number of devoted labourers in carrying it forward, cannot fail, under the Divine blessing, to be followed by valuable results, in the spread of evangelical truth, and the principles of genuine liberty throughout the benighted parts of Ireland.

The establishment of a *Theological Hall* in connection with the Church in this country, is another important result of covenant-renovation. Such a measure had been contemplated for years before; but various obstacles prevented its attainment till the Synod had, in its associated capacity, engaged in covenant to be the Lord's, and had solemnly vowed to undertake, at whatever difficulty, any work that appeared to be required for the promotion of his glory. The unanimity with which this "school of the prophets" was instituted, the anxious desire evinced throughout the Church to have the whole education and training of the future ministry under her own control, and the ready and prayerful support accorded to the seminary, afford encouraging promise that this measure is

destined to be of lasting and extensive benefit, not only to the present but likewise to future generations.

4. The scheme for *Ministerial support and efficiency*, so auspiciously begun, and so vigorously and comfortably carried forward, resulted also from the work of covenanting. To accord to a faithful ministry a liberal and honourable support is not only a dictate of reason and revelation, and a special ordinance of the Church's Head: it is, moreover, essential to the existence, increase, and efficiency of the ministry. This has been perceived and felt, as it never was in this country before, since the Church pledged anew its vow of allegiance to the King of Zion. All right-hearted men have confessed the urgent necessity of placing this matter on a right footing. The Christian liberality of the people has been drawn forth beyond expectation; and encouragement has been held forth to the youth of the Church, that, in devoting themselves to the ministry, they will receive an honourable support. Other important measures that have been contemplated, and in part resolved upon, such as the adapting of the testimony of the Church to her present position in Ireland, the emission of a revised code of discipline, the establishment of a fund for superannuated ministers, and of another for the support of ministers' widows and families, exhibit the ready disposition with which a Church that has given itself in covenant to God, can enter upon new and untried efforts for the advancement of his glory. The spirit of prayer and holy exertion, resulting from the Divine blessing on covenant-dedication, and from a sense of the obligation of solemn vows, has led to such measures; and it is trusted that its increase and prevalence will further their happy accomplishment. Already many throughout the Church have experienced that "*it is more blessed to give than to receive;*" and that it is a privilege of the highest kind to live and labour to promote the welfare of Christ's Church, and the universal establishment of his kingdom. Thus does it appear that the work of covenanting, in these recent days, has been followed by evident tokens of returning blessing and revival in the Church. Progress has been made in all that tends to the Church's internal prosperity and extension, in the short period since the work was essayed, much beyond what had taken place for many years previously. The faithful throughout the Church have been constrained to say—"The God of our fathers has remembered for us his holy covenant." "*The Lord has done great things for us, whereof we are glad.*"

5. In conclusion, we remark, *That much remains yet to be done to attest the sincerity of the Church's renewed vows, and to accomplish the great objects contemplated in her solemn covenant.*

First. *The grand principles of the British covenants should be carefully studied, and means should be taken to make them more generally known.* These principles are glorious and all-important, and are indispensable to the safety and prosperity of the Christian commonwealth. The universal Headship of the Redeemer, the supremacy of the Word, the subjection of nations and their rulers to his sovereign authority, their paramount *obligation* to promote his honour, and to protect and foster his Church, and the duty of all to whom Divine revelation comes, to profess and maintain the true religion, to oppose all error and idolatry, and to live godly lives—these, it must be admitted, are truths at once fundamental, and of universal and perpetual concern. Rightly understood and applied, they have the most extensive and salutary bearing. They are inseparably connected with other great truths, which lie at the basis of civil and ecclesiastical society; and the devout believer in Scripture cannot hesitate to declare that they shall one day be generally received, and shall, in their universal prevalence, purify and bless society. The vow to maintain these important doctrines implies an *intelligent acquaintance* with them, and an obligation, felt and acknowledged, to *propagate them as widely as possible.* Those who have voluntarily come under this obligation should labour after an enlarged knowledge of the grand truths of the covenanted reformation, and should consider themselves specially bound to impart it to others. This study will tend to elevate the intellect, by presenting to the mind subjects of contemplation of vast magnitude and great relative importance. Hitherto, the Church professing full adherence to the covenanted reformation, has been sadly neglectful of the great duty of making known the principles of her testimony. The altered state of society, and the circumstances of the times, pregnant as they are with momentous changes, preceding a season of conflict, and the period of sowing the precious seed, which is to produce hereafter a rich harvest of blessing, require a bolder and more decided policy than has been hitherto pursued. It is not enough to emit a testimony for the instruction of the members of the Church, or of the few that may be attracted to wait upon her ministrations, or to inquire after her fellowship. There should be means taken thoroughly to instruct the rising youth of the Church in the principles of the covenants of their fathers,

and to communicate the same knowledge to others throughout society. It is indispensably required that witnesses should be intelligent, if they would be influential; and if fundamental truths are to be successfully defended, or are expected to leaven and bless society, they must be thoroughly understood and faithfully applied. It would be becoming those who have recently renewed the covenant, to devise measures for publishing, in various forms, illustrations and vindications of its valuable principles; and it were worthy of the cause which the Church has avouched, to task all her available resources for this purpose. What may be the best method of pressing upon the attention of the nation, and of all classes throughout the community, from the highest to the lowest, the great truths of a martyr-testimony, it may not be all at once easy to determine. But let those who have anew pledged their allegiance to the King of Zion be fully persuaded of their paramount duty to make known his "light and saving health." Let them betake themselves to this as the special work of these last times, and a way will be opened up for its performance.¹ Thus will be accomplished the predictions concerning the Church's enlargement and blessing, in connection with the diffusion of scriptural light: "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." "Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of thy times, and strength of salvation: the fear of the Lord is his treasure."²

Again. *A higher measure of spirituality should be aimed after by ministers and people, in all their ministrations, and in all*

¹ The Reformed Church in France, in the early period of its history, affords a fine instance of an earnest concern to spread the principles of its testimony, and of active measures taken for the exhibition and vindication of precious truths. At the meetings of its National Assembly, certain works were agreed upon, as needful to be written for the advancement or defence of the Reformation; able ministers were appointed to prepare them, and were freed from other labours, and supplied with suitable means while engaged in this service, and the Church took upon itself the expense and labour of publishing and circulating such works. In this way, the truth was powerfully promoted, and the early literature of this branch of the Reformed Church, from the first exposed to fierce persecution, is most valuable and interesting. A similar course adopted by the covenanting Church in our day might be productive of important benefits. At least, the publication of *a series of Tracts*, illustrating and vindicating the doctrines of grace, and the great truths of her testimony, and exhibiting and enforcing religious ordinances, and the duties of practical godliness, and the organization of a *scheme of cheap publications*, might be readily effected, and might prove of *great service to the rising youth and to inquirers.*

² Daniel xii. 4; Isaiah xxxiii. 6.

intercourse in the Church. The mere profession of theological doctrine, however orthodox, or of the principles of a testimony, however excellent, without corresponding holiness and spirituality of heart and life, can never be productive of any extensive salutary effects. Those who have openly dedicated themselves in covenant to God, should consider themselves bound to walk before Him in all the ways of godliness. They should imbibe and display the mind of Christ. The plentiful effusion of the Spirit from on high has eminently distinguished past times of covenanting; and like the fire that anciently came down from heaven, and consumed the sacrifices, it has been the token of Divine acceptance. It has likewise been the grand agency in conducting to a prosperous issue the designs proposed in these federal transactions. Spirituality, if duly cultivated, will discover itself in habits of self-examination, the devotional reading of the Word, and frequent prayer. The tone of conversation will be humble, loving, and edifying; and intercourse with fellow-Christians will be conducted so as to impress the mind with the awful reality and importance of Divine things, and to excite to all godly practice. The Spirit—the grand promise of the last times—should be fervently sought for the Church. His gracious indwelling and powerful presence are the grand evidence of union to Christ, and the source of all blessing to believers. “*If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.*” “*Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness become a fruitful field.*”

We who have publicly entered into covenant with God should not only plead the promise of the Spirit's plentiful outpouring and wait for it—we should ourselves aim always to walk in the exercise of the Spirit's holy graces. We are required not only to “live in the Spirit,” but also to “walk in the Spirit,” avoiding whatever would grieve Him, and by a conversation in heaven, and the active, vigorous, and constant display of a temper and disposition becoming our solemn profession, showing that we are indeed “temples of God,” and a “habitation of God through the Spirit.” Such a frame habitually cherished and displayed would greatly conduce to our own comfort and assured hope, and would powerfully recommend the excellence of our profession to others. Sacred predictions assure us that the presence of the Holy Spirit, producing these effects in the hearts and lives of professed Christians, will be a principal blessing flowing from covenant-dedication in the latter days—“*According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye*

came out of Egypt, so my Spirit remaineth among you: fear ye not."¹ "As for me, this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; my Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever."²

Furthermore. Those who have renewed their vows to the Most High should consider themselves *bound to carry out the designs of the covenant, in increased devoted exertions to advance the cause and kingdom of Christ.* This they have explicitly engaged to do in the act of covenanting. One of the special vows of those who have taken the bond, pledges them to this great duty; and its whole spirit and principles aim at the same all-important object. The grand articles of our fathers' covenant are opposed to long-established and prevailing systems of error; and they should be resolutely displayed to confront and overcome them. Witnesses that have been signally owned of God in past conflicts were distinguished for self-denial, holy decision, and the cheerful sacrifice of all personal worldly interests, through their earnest concern to advance the cause of truth and righteousness. "*They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.*"³ The present age demands devoted effort on the part of all who would be honoured as instruments for the establishment of the kingdom of Christ. By maintaining a holy separation from all corrupt and immoral systems in Church and State, they should aim to walk with undefiled garments. They should be characterized by fervent and enlightened zeal, and be ever distinguished by a public spirit. Our time, worldly substance, and opportunities of usefulness, are talents entrusted to us by our exalted Lord; and we are under obligation to lay them out for the promotion of his glory, as we expect at last to have to render to Him a certain and particular account of our stewardship. Our high religious privileges greatly increase this obligation. Especially should the manifold tokens of the Divine favour, enjoyed in the recent act of covenanting, constrain us to earnest, self-denying, and sustained exertions for the advancement of the best of causes. We were permitted to engage in the solemn transaction without let or hindrance. Enemies were restrained, fears dissipated, and through the good hand of our fathers' God upon us, all was peaceful, encouraging, and refreshful. A sense

¹ Haggai ii. 5.

² Isaiah lix. 21.

³ Revelation xii. 11.

of abundant goodness should impel us to carry out the purpose of our dedication, in pleading more earnestly, labouring more faithfully, and giving more cheerfully than we have ever yet done, for the promotion of the Redeemer's glory throughout the earth. The times are eminently favourable for sustained holy efforts, for the establishment of the Redeemer's kingdom. Society is everywhere characterized by earnest activity. Many "wide doors" are thrown open before the Church; there are many fields already white to the spiritual harvest. It is a period, too, of enlarged Christian liberality; and though covenanting witnesses in our times have not hitherto manifested much of that spirit which makes costly sacrifices for the advancement of truth, there are yet some encouraging indications that He "whose is the silver and the gold" is disposing his servants to consecrate their gain to the Lord, and to esteem it a high privilege to dedicate their worldly substance to his service. Were all who recently renewed the covenant to consider their special obligations to pray fervently, devote their substance, and employ personal exertion for promoting Christ's cause, we cannot doubt that the principles of our covenants would be more widely diffused and more generally embraced. We should always remember that God's settled ordinance is that the Church is destined to be the instrument of her own enlargement; that "the liberal shall be made fat," and that they that water others shall be themselves "watered." Former seasons of covenanting, as at the erection of the tabernacle in the wilderness, at the season of Pentecost, and in the times of revival, have all been characterized by enlarged liberality and increased holy effort. It concerns us to exhibit like precious fruits of our recent singular privileges; and, in constant remembrance of our sacred vows, to regard it as our highest honour to pray, and labour, and spend for the establishment of our Lord's cause and kingdom in the earth. "*They shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many generations.*"¹

Finally. Covenanting should be improved *by anticipating the day of promised enlargement and blessing, and preparing for its coming.* That the Lord will bring again Zion, and restore her captivity as streams of water in the south, is matter of joyful and assured promise. The time to favour Zion is appointed, and there are certain tokens of its near approach. The

¹ Isaiah lxi. 4.

servants of God even now “take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof.”¹ Evil systems are tottering to their downfall. The cup of Babylon’s wickedness is full to overflowing, and her fearful plagues hasten apace. Faithful witnesses have nearly *finished their testimony*; and though a brief period of severe suffering may await them, the cause which they maintain shall speedily triumph, and they themselves be exalted to power and dignity, in the sight of their enemies.² Those who have taken hold of God’s covenant, and yielded themselves to the Lord, should fix their minds on the coming deliverance and glory. They should “arise and shine.” For Zion’s sake they should not rest, nor for Jerusalem’s sake should they “hold their peace.”³ Girding their loins for the approaching conflict, they should take to them “the whole armour of God,” that they “may be able to withstand in the evil day.” Keeping the Word of Christ’s “patience,” they shall be preserved from the “hour of temptation.”⁴ With steadfast faith they should rest on the gracious promises respecting Zion’s deliverance and blessing, and should turn them into fervent prayers. Standing on their watch tower, they should wait for the appointed vision, and hail the first streaks of the dawn—the light breaking upon the distant mountains—as the harbinger of a day of brightness and glory. We who have entered into covenant with God, and who have willingly devoted ourselves and all we have to Him, should seek to *antedate the millennium* by walking in the Spirit, setting our affections on things above, and abounding in the work of the Lord. The Church is called everywhere to put on her beautiful garments, and to appear in her true character, reflecting the glory of her exalted Head, and shining in the splendour of moral and spiritual excellence. “OUT OF ZION, THE PERFECTION OF BEAUTY, GOD HATH SHINED.” “*Who is this that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?*”⁵

Thus improved, our sacred federal bond will prove an eminent means of revival to the Church. It will furnish a powerful argument in prayer for more abundant blessings; and when the trials and conflicts of Christ’s witnesses shall have been finished, and the cause which they maintained shall have gloriously triumphed, then shall the faithfulness of God

¹ Ps. cii. 14.³ Isa. lxii. 7.⁵ Ps. l. 2; Song vi. 10.² Rev. xi. 11, 12.⁴ Rev. iii. 10.

in covenant towards his people be brightly manifested. "I will set a sign among them, . . . and they shall declare my glory among the Gentiles. And they shall bring all their brethren for an offering unto the Lord out of all nations . . . to my holy mountain Jerusalem, saith the Lord, as the children of Israel bring an offering in a clean vessel unto the house of the Lord. And I will also take of them for priests and for Levites, saith the Lord. For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain."¹

¹ Isaiah lxvi. 19-22.

CONFESSION OF SINS.

THE following is the Confession of Sins and Bond of Covenanting, as taken by the Synod at Dervock, and afterwards throughout the Congregations of the Church :—

Believing that we are authorized by the Word of God, and called by Divine Providence to the solemn work of covenant-
renovation, and being persuaded that it is a necessary prepara-
tion to so great and solemn a duty that we be duly sensible
of, and humbled for, our own and the nation's sins, and that we
freely and fully confess them : therefore, professing faith in the
Lord Jesus Christ, and reliance on his grace who is exalted a
Prince and a Saviour to give repentance unto Israel and remis-
sion of sins, we do confess our own and our fathers' sins, the
sins of the Churches and the nation, in consequence of which
we, and the people among whom we dwell, have been exposed
to many spiritual plagues and outward judgments.

1st. With shame and confusion of face we confess and lament
the national provocations of these lands. We have done wickedly
—our kings, our princes, our nobles, our judges, our magis-
trates, our ministers, and our people. Though the Lord hath
long and clearly spoken unto us, we have not hearkened unto
his voice, and though He hath followed us with providential
goodness and tender mercies, we have not been allured to wait
on Him, and to walk in his ways. Though He hath stricken
us, we have not grieved ; we have not remembered to render
to the Lord according to his goodness, and according to our
own vows and promises.

Especially we confess and lament that these nations have
perfidiously cast off their allegiance to Messiah, the Prince of

the kings of the earth, by abandoning the national covenants, and have not only broken solemn vows sworn before God, angels, and men, but have persevered in courses of defection, on account of which the Lord's hand is heavy upon us.

At the close of the Second Reformation Period, the stated enemies of a covenanted work of reformation were, in palpable violation of vows recently renewed, and despite the protest of God's faithful servants, admitted to places of authority and trust in the nation ; and the general national defection was still more deplorably manifested at the Restoration, when, by public measures of unexampled perfidy, the legal securities which had been previously given to covenanted attainments were swept away, Presbyterian order was overthrown, and abjured Prelacy set up in its stead, the covenants of our fathers were declared to be unlawful oaths, and ignominiously burned ; and, by the assertion of the blasphemous supremacy of the Crown, the Headship of Christ and the independence of his Church were wickedly invaded.

We lament, moreover, the aggravated and complicated national wickedness which followed those steps of backsliding, in the long and bloody persecution of Christ's faithful witnesses—in the imposition of sinful and ensnaring oaths, declarations, and bonds ; in the indulgences offered, on sinful conditions, by Erastian supremacy, and readily accepted, as well as in the toleration issued by a Popish monarch, in furtherance of Popish objects, and thankfully acknowledged by almost all the Presbyterian ministers and people.

Furthermore, we mourn that, at the time of the Revolution, when the Lord wrought a great deliverance for the nation from arbitrary power and Popish oppression, there was not a return to former scriptural attainments ; on the contrary, the nation sinned yet more, by leaving untouched all that was done against the covenanted work of reformation, by public acts at the Restoration, and by retaining in the statute-book the Act **Rescissory**, by which valuable reformation attainments were **condemned and set aside**, by establishing an unscriptural supremacy

in the settlement of the crown, and by introducing an oath of allegiance instead of the oath of our covenant, which was regarded as exhibiting, on a scriptural and constitutional basis, the relation and duties of rulers and people in the reforming period, and binding both to discharge their respective duties, consistently with their allegiance to the Prince of the kings of the earth.

We regret still further the sins committed by the British nation, in framing the incorporating union between England and Scotland, in open violation of a principal article of the national vows, inasmuch as an essential condition of it is the perpetual establishment of Prelacy in England and Ireland, and in enacting the law of patronage in Scotland, whereby, in opposition to the Word of God, the people are denied the choice of their pastors, and a wide door is opened for the entrance of an unworthy ministry. While, in accordance with the Solemn League and Covenant, we desire the union of these three kingdoms on the basis of scriptural truth, we lament that the nation is again pledged, in opposition to our solemn vows, by the legislative union of Great Britain and Ireland, to perpetuate and support the Prelatical establishment—a system not only unscriptural, but intolerant and oppressive. We also grieve for the sin of the nation in requiring many unnecessary and sinful oaths, as essential to qualify persons for holding office in the public service. We lament that the administration, equally with the constitution of the British empire, is in opposition to the authority of the Mediator, and conducted on principles at variance with the Sacred Scriptures, the statute-book of Heaven.

Rulers, supreme and subordinate, are elected to office who are devoid of scriptural qualifications, and many of them are irreligious, infidel, and immoral. The requirements of God's Word are overlooked equally by those who choose and those who are chosen. Papists, open enemies of scriptural truth, have, by the Roman Catholic Emancipation Act, been raised to power and exalted to a place in the councils of the nation;

and Popery, Prelacy, Erastianism, and Infidelity, exercise a preponderating influence in the administration of the affairs of the nation, not only preventing the progress of evangelical truth, but likewise provoking the Most High to send upon us heavy and repeated judgments. The nation, by its rulers, makes no proper acknowledgment of the Lord's Anointed, but is often found in league with his enemies, and in open hostility to his laws and the interests of his kingdom. Wicked and idolatrous systems are fostered and encouraged by the State, and the national treasures applied to their support. While public endowments are given to ministers of evangelical sentiments, and to the abettors of Socinian and Arian heresies, on principles sinful on the part of the State, the recipients are not only degraded, but involved in the sin of the rulers. Public property is largely appropriated to uphold an unscriptural hierarchy in England and Ireland, and an Erastian Presbyterian establishment in Scotland, to endow the Popish college of Maynooth, to support the Popish hierarchy in Canada and Malta, and to propagate the destructive delusions of Popery in other British colonies and dependencies.

We lament the defects and evil principles of many of the educational institutions of the nation, and particularly of the Queen's Colleges and National System of Education for Ireland. The Word of God is dishonoured by not being recognized as the basis of moral and religious instruction, and by the restrictions placed on it in these seminaries. Neither is there provision made to secure for the pupils sound instruction in religion and morality; while, by the regulations of both colleges and schools, error is protected. We deplore the sin of the nation in its connection with these things, and especially the sanction and encouragement given to the national system by evangelical Christians of different denominations.

Furthermore, we confess and lament the prevalence and increase, throughout these lands, of many gross immoralities, the fruits of natural apostasy. The Sabbath of the Lord is grievously desecrated by the transmission of the mail, the open-

ing of post-offices and news-rooms, and the running of Sabbath trains on railways, which modes of Sabbath profanation being sanctioned by the civil rulers, gives encouragement to increasing disregard of the sanctity of the Lord's day by all ranks in the community.

To national perjury has been added a vast multiplicity of unnecessary oaths, often taken without any due sense of the object of worship, and in a superstitious manner. Profane swearing, drunkenness, and oppression greatly abound. The idols of political expediency and national glory are more regarded than the authority and honour of the Moral Governor of the nations, or than the claims of philanthropy. Legislation at home, and intercourse with other nations, are not conducted to promote the kingdom of Christ, but to uphold and perpetuate systems which the Lord will destroy with the breath of his mouth and the brightness of his coming. A flood of profaneness and wickedness overspreads the whole land; persons of all ranks have corrupted their ways; "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." All these our public sins are greatly aggravated on account of the singular privileges which Britain has long enjoyed, in being favoured with the pure light of the Gospel, and in providential preservation and prosperity, and by the mournful impenitence of all classes under recent solemn judgments. For all these aggravated evils we desire to be sincerely grieved in heart; and while we sigh and weep for the abominations that are done in the land, we confess that, by our own unfaithfulness, we have had a part in national provocations, and that we deserve to share in national judgments.

2d. With sorrow of heart we bewail the existence of many and great errors in doctrine and order, and evils in practice *among the Churches throughout these lands.* While at the Revolution the nation showed no disposition to return to a sense of covenant-obligation to the Lord, the Presbyterian Church shared in the guilt, by accepting the civil establishment without remonstrating, in an ecclesiastical capacity, against what

was unscriptural and defective in it, or making any acknowledgment of former mournful backslidings and oppressions. It became a partaker in the aggravated sin of the State in retaining the Act Rescissory, by offering no reclamation against it. It also refused, by any public act, to acknowledge the perpetual obligation of the Covenants, National and Solemn League, or explicitly to approve of the covenanted attainments of a former period. It accepted from the hands of an unscripturally constituted State its doctrinal confession, leaving other essential parts of a glorious reformation buried in oblivion, and virtually rejected. It grievously failed adequately to assert, and faithfully to carry out in practice, the following great principles:—The exclusive Headship of Christ, the Divine right of Presbyterian Church Government, and the intrinsic power of the Church to hold her own ecclesiastical assemblies. Instead of acting on these noble principles, it meanly succumbed to various gross Erastian encroachments of the State; and, by admitting into ecclesiastical offices, at the dictation of Erastian rulers, known enemies of the covenanted reformation, and persecutors of God's people, and neglecting to exercise discipline upon the erroneous and the immoral, the Revolution Church receded from the ground of the former blessed Reformation, encouraged the nation and its rulers in apostasy, and opened the door for the mournful backslidings and defections that have ever since characterized the Churches of Britain.

The Headship of Christ over the Church and the nation has been infringed, the covenants of our fathers have been abandoned by nearly all the Churches that had acknowledged them, and the supreme authority of the Divine Word, in its application to doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the Churches in these lands, is lamentably disregarded.

We lament that, within the pale of the Episcopal Establishment, some of the worst errors of Popery have been spreading, and Episcopal dignitaries have done nothing to arrest the evil; but, on the other hand, have sought to oppress conscientious

individuals within the establishment who have dissented from some of its unscriptural doctrines and usages, and have displayed intolerance towards dissenters without its pale. The Presbyterian Establishment in North Britain is now exhibited before the nation, in accordance with our fathers' faithful protest, as in a state of degrading bondage under Erastian control and direction. Other religious bodies, claiming connection with our reforming ancestors, and maintaining evangelical sentiments, have not yet returned to reformation attainments, but acknowledge unscriptural systems, and do not faithfully testify against the evil measures and practices of civil rulers. Ignorance and error in doctrine, and laxity in discipline, extensively prevail throughout religious communities, important duties are neglected, and sealing ordinances are profaned by unworthy persons being allowed to partake of them. Great masses of the people are left to live in ungodliness, and perish in sin, without any adequate means being employed to reclaim and instruct them. Such things do great dishonour to the King of Zion, foster deception in multitudes, confirm the world in ungodliness, and are followed by the ruin of many souls.

With departure from our fathers' testimony, gross errors are avowed, and, in some quarters, spreading. Socinian and Arian heresies pervert the Scriptures, and blaspheme the only Lord God and our Saviour. Arminianism, aiming to subvert the Gospel of sovereign free grace, leavens large portions of the ecclesiastical community. The carnal views of Millenarians tend to mar the progress of true godliness, and impede exertions for the establishment of the kingdom of Christ.

And Voluntaryism, as opposed to the Headship of the Mediator over the nations, and to the duty of rulers to foster the Church, encourages still further departure from former reformation attainments, and would prevent the return of the nation to a scriptural standard. For these manifold evils, existing in the British Churches, amidst abundant light and privilege, we desire to be deeply humbled before God, and to mourn in secret places. "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our

righteousness are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. Our holy and our beautiful house, where our fathers praised thee, is burnt up with fire, and all our pleasant things are laid waste."

3*d.* Our own great and aggravated transgressions, as individuals, and as a covenanted, witnessing people.

Desiring to be deeply humbled, we confess with shame before God, the Searcher of hearts, that we have provoked the Divine displeasure by neither remembering nor fulfilling the obligations under which our solemn covenants have placed us; we have not practically testified as we ought against the sins of the nation, nor endeavoured, by our exhortations, prayers, and examples, to bring back the people from courses of backsliding. Even some of our members, inconsistently with their covenant engagements, in a time of great public excitement, towards the close of the last century, were drawn into an unscriptural confederation for the attainment of political objects. We have greatly undervalued the inestimable blessings of the Gospel, nor have we been duly concerned to experience its power. We confess and lament our unbelief, formality, selfishness, worldly-mindedness, and carnality; our declension from first-love, lukewarmness, and sinful security; and our great want of tenderness, watchfulness, and spirituality in our disposition and deportment. Our remissness in secret, family, and social worship bears testimony against us; and we have, alas! taken too little delight in searching the Scriptures, self-examination, and wrestling with God in prayer. We have not walked as becomes the Gospel of Christ, but have greatly failed in all duties that we owe to God, ourselves, and our neighbour.

Sufficient care has not been taken to instruct the ignorant, and to separate the precious from the vile in the fellowship of the Church. We have not been affected as we should by the falls of professors, nor taken warning from them ourselves, nor sufficiently mourned in secret for the dishonour done to God by these scandals, nor pitied nor prayed for those who have so fallen.

We have not exhorted one another daily, according to the Divine direction, nor cherished the love of the brethren, as we ought; and, by our apathy and unfaithfulness, we have largely partaken in the sins of others.

We desire to be humbled greatly because we have neither duly watched against carnal company and converse, nor studied to recommend religion to others by a holy, edifying conversation, and consistent example; nor have we, as we ought, exhorted and admonished one another in meekness and love; and we have failed to improve many precious opportunities of social prayer and spiritual conference.

We have been barren and unfruitful in the ways of the Lord. Parents have not been duly careful to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, nor to make them early acquainted with the distinctive principles of a faithful testimony. We mourn the breaches of Zion, and would confess that, by our pride, self-seeking, worldly spirit, and want of brotherly affection, we have had a great hand in her divisions; many have been seeking their own things, few the things that are Christ's.

We have come short in obeying the command of our ascended Lord, to preach the Gospel to every creature. In the enjoyment ourselves of eminent privileges, we have been too much at ease—we have dwelt in our ceiled houses, while the Lord's house lies waste; and multitudes have lived and died ignorant of Christ and his salvation, without adequate efforts on our part to enlighten them. More than is meet has been withheld from the support of a faithful ministry, and the extension of truth in the dark places of the earth.

While we complain of our poverty, we have provoked God to deal with us as unjust stewards; we have, in some instances, inordinately sought the advancement of our families; property is still consumed on intoxicating drinks and the vanities of life. We have come short of our duty to live as the lights of the world and the salt of the earth; we have not walked worthy of our high vocation as Christians and covenanted witnesses, not-

withstanding our eminent privileges, a high profession, repeated solemn vows, and many manifestations of God's favour.

For all these, and other sins not mentioned in this confession, we desire to be deeply humbled before God. We acknowledge that the Lord our God is righteous and holy in the judgments which He has sent upon this nation, and that, should He cast us out of his sight, and, still further, send a sword among us to avenge the quarrel of his covenant, He would only be dealing with us in deserved indignation. Seeing that the Lord, the Covenant God of our fathers, is yet waiting to be gracious, and that He has left Him yet a small remnant in the land, we earnestly desire and pray that He would pardon our personal and relative offences, and purge away the sins of this whole Church and land, bring back his departed glory, and dwell among us, owning us as his people, and thus accomplish a speedy and blessed reformation.—All which we unfeignedly and earnestly seek, through the sacrifice and intercession of Jesus Christ, our redeeming Head and Lord.

ACT OF COVENANT RENOVATION ; IN WHICH THE NATIONAL COVENANT OF SCOTLAND, AND THE SOLEMN LEAGUE AND COVENANT, ARE RENEWED, IN ACCOMMODATION TO THE PRESENT TIME.

We, whose names are underwritten, professing the faith once delivered to the saints, and resting our souls for eternal salvation on the merits and mediation of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, do, with grateful and united hearts, desire to praise the Lord for the light of the Reformation, and especially for the glory and fulness of the covenanted reformation, as it once shone in Scotland, and in part also in England and Ireland. Regarding its rise and establishment as a singular and eminent fruit of the Divine favour to the lands of our nativity, we this day recognize the scriptural excellence of its grand principles, as they were embraced by the Church and

Kingdom of Scotland, and as exhibited in the National Covenant, and afterwards avouched by persons of all ranks in the Solemn League and Covenant of the three kingdoms. These federal deeds, being moral and scriptural in their nature, and entered into by these nations through their representatives, are and will be binding upon them till the latest posterity. Although we are not now in circumstances to renew these covenants in a national capacity, we nevertheless acknowledge them as the righteous and fundamental compact, according to which the legislation and administration of these kingdoms should be conducted, and the qualifications of rulers, and the reciprocal duties of rulers and people, should be settled. We also gladly express our approval of the conduct of our worthy ancestors who renewed the national deeds on several occasions, pledging themselves, as a minority, to the whole of the covenanted reformation, when the majority of the nation had violated the oath of God. Deploring the sin of the nation in the rejection of these covenants, and desiring to be free of any participation in its guilt, after mature deliberation and much searching of heart we resolve, following the example of God's people in former times, both in these and in other lands, and relying on the strength of Divine grace, to renew the National Covenant, and Solemn League and Covenant, in the terms of this bond, adapted to our present condition and circumstances.

We, therefore, with all reverence and humility, approach the Majesty in the heavens, and lifting up our heart with our hands, do jointly and severally swear, in his great name—

1. That having, after careful examination, embraced the true religion as it is taught in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, and exhibited in the doctrinal standards of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, the National Covenant, and Solemn League and Covenant, the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, and the Testimony of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, we joyfully, before God and the world, profess this as the true Christian faith and religion, and by the grace of God we shall sincerely and constantly endeavour to understand it

more fully, preserve it pure and entire, and transmit it faithfully to posterity. Confessing with our mouth the Lord Jesus Christ, and believing in Him with our hearts, we accept of God in Christ as our all-sufficient Portion, and yield ourselves, soul and body, to be the Lord's now and for ever.—And as his professed servants, relying solely upon the Redeemer's righteousness for acceptance, we take the Moral Law as the rule of our life, and engage that we shall study to walk in all God's commandments and ordinances blamelessly. Living to the glory of God as our chief end, we shall diligently attend to the duties of the closet, the family, the stated fellowship-meeting, and the sanctuary, and shall seek in them to worship God in spirit and in truth. We solemnly promise, in reliance on God's grace, to abstain from known vice and all appearance of evil, to cultivate Christian charity, to do good to all men as we have opportunity, and to endeavour, by a constant course of godly practice, to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

2. And while we own and profess the true religion, pledge ourselves to its preservation, and to endeavour to bring the Churches in these kingdoms, and throughout the world, to the nearest scriptural conjunction and uniformity, we at the same time solemnly abjure all false religion, superstition, heresy, schism, profaneness, and whatsoever is contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness. Particularly, we abjure and condemn the tyranny, heresy, superstition, and idolatry of the Romish Antichrist; we condemn his usurpation of the prerogatives of our Lord Jesus Christ as Head of his Church; his blasphemous priesthood and wicked hierarchy; and his subjugation of civil government to their cruel dominion. We wholly reject the claims of the Romish Church to supremacy and infallibility; its perversion of the rule of faith by unwritten traditions; the exaltation of Apocryphal writings to equality with the Word of God; and its denial of the use of the Scriptures, and of the right of private judgment, to the people. We repudiate and abhor the manifold corruptions in doctrine, as they respect original sin, justification by faith, the meritorious

work of Christ, and the work of the Spirit in sanctification, the nature, number, and use of the sacraments ; and the state of the dead. We condemn its corruptions of the moral law, by the wicked distinction between venial and mortal sins ; the merit and satisfaction of human works ; mental reservation ; absolving from oaths and contracts ; and impious interference with the law of marriage. We abhor its idolatry, superstition, and corruption in worship by the adoration of the Virgin and of images, and invocation of saints and angels ; the offering of the mass as a sacrifice for the sins of the dead and the living ; veneration of relics ; canonization of men ; consecration of days and places, and prayers in an unknown tongue ; processions, and blasphemous litany ; and, finally, we detest and condemn its corruption and cruelty in discipline and government, by granting indulgences, enjoining penances, promulgating and executing cruel decrees, warranting persecutions and massacres ; with its countless superstitious rites and usages, and its gross and intolerable bigotry, in excluding from the hope of salvation all who do not acknowledge its wicked supremacy, and maintain its soul-destroying heresies. And we engage, according to our places and stations, and by all scriptural means competent thereto, to labour for the extirpation of this monstrous combined system of heresy, idolatry, superstition, and oppression, believing it to be fundamentally opposed to the glory of God, the enemy of Christ and his Gospel, and destructive to men's souls, liberties, and civil rights ; at the same time, in love to the persons of those who are under the thralldom of Antichrist, we shall earnestly seek that they may be delivered out of Babylon, that so they may not be partakers in her coming plagues.

In like manner, we reject and abjure Prelacy as essentially unscriptural and antichristian, and as oppressive to the Church of Christ and hostile to the interests of pure and undefiled religion. We testify against the Established Church of England and Ireland, for its imperfect reformation, and its long continuance in the sin of many antichristian practices ; for its

abject acquiescence in the Erastian supremacy of the Crown; for its want of scriptural discipline; and for sinful connivance at the propagation, by many of its ministers and members, of Puseyism, which embraces some of the worst errors and usages of Popery. We reject Socinianism, Arminianism, Arianism, Erastianism, Antinomianism, Millenarianism, Voluntarism, and all systems opposed to the truth. Disowning and condemning all infidelity and libertinism, falsely called liberality, we pledge ourselves to pray and labour, according to our power, that whatever is contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness may be removed, that thereby a free course may be opened up for the diffusion of the Gospel throughout all nations.

3. Believing that the peace and prosperity of the nation, and the quietness and stability of the reformed religion, depend in a great degree on the establishment of a scriptural system of civil rule, and upon the approved character of rulers, supreme and subordinate, we engage, with all sincerity and constancy, to maintain, in our several vocations, with our prayers, efforts, and lives, the doctrine of Messiah's Headship, not only over the Church, but also over the civil commonwealth. We promise that our allegiance to Christ shall regulate all our civil relations, attachments, profession, and deportment. We shall labour, by our doctrines, prayers, and example, to lead all, of whatever rank, to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. And we shall constantly endeavour, by all scriptural means, as far as in our power, to bring these nations to own the Mediator as the Head of all principality and rule, to subject the national polity to his authority, and to set up those only as rulers who submit to Christ the Lord, and are possessed of a due measure of scriptural qualifications. We recognize the obligation of the public covenants upon the nation, we protest against the subversion of the scriptural and covenanted constitution of the land, and we hold ourselves bound faithfully to testify against, and in every righteous way to resist, whatever would prevent the

nation from returning to former righteous attainments. At the same time, we shall continue to promote the ends of public justice, and give our support to whatever is for the good of the commonwealth in which we dwell, when this can be done without any sinful condition ; and we shall continue to pray to God for the coming of his kingdom, in the overthrow of all systems of iniquity, and in the universal pacification of the nations of the earth.

4. Being persuaded that a time is coming when there shall be a high degree of unity and uniformity in the visible Church ; believing, moreover, that schism is sin ; lamenting the existence of divisions, and firmly trusting that divisions shall cease, and the people of God become one Catholic Church over all the earth, we shall seek the reformation of religion in the lands in which we live, and shall endeavour after a uniformity in religion among the Churches of God in the three kingdoms and throughout the world. Considering it a principal duty of our profession to cultivate a holy brotherhood, we regard ourselves as bound to feel and act as one with all who in every land pursue the grand ends contemplated in the Presbyterian covenanted reformation. We take ourselves pledged to assist and defend one another in maintaining the cause of true religion. Whatever shall be done to the least of us, for that cause, shall be taken as done to us all ; and we shall suffer ourselves neither to be divided nor withdrawn, by whatever suggestion, allurements, or terror, from this blessed confederation, but shall continue to display the testimony of our fathers as the ground of approved union ; and by the dissemination and application of the principles embodied therein, and by the cultivation of Christian charity, we shall labour to remove stumbling-blocks, and to gather into one the scattered and divided friends of truth and righteousness.

5. Believing that the ascended Mediator is not only King in Zion but also King over all the earth, and that his glory is destined yet to fill the whole world, we desire to dedicate ourselves, in our respective places, to the great work of making

known his light and salvation throughout the nations. We solemnly engage, by our prayers, pecuniary contributions, and personal exertions, to seek the revival of true religion, and the conversion of Jews and Gentiles, that men, both in their individual and national capacity, may submit themselves to the Redeemer, that men may be blessed in Him, and all nations call Him blessed.

And this solemn act of covenant-renovation we enter upon in the presence of Almighty God, the Searcher of all hearts, with unfeigned intention, through the grace of the Most High, of paying our vows to the Lord. In entering upon such a great and momentous undertaking at the present time, we trust we are actuated by no sinister, selfish, or carnal motives, but simply by the desire, in our several places, of promoting the glory of God and the best interests, for time and eternity, of immortal souls. We commit ourselves and ours, our cause and influence, our safety and life, into his hands who is faithful and true, waiting continually for his certain and glorious appearance. Seeking grace from on high to fulfil our solemn engagements, we most humbly beseech the Lord to strengthen us, by his Holy Spirit, for this end, and to bless our proceedings with such success as may be deliverance and safety to his people, and encouragement to other Christian Churches to join in this or a similar bond, with a view to the peace and prosperity of Christian commonwealths, and the enlargement and establishment of the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom be glory in the Church throughout all ages, world without end.—Amen.

THE SOLEMN LEAGUE AND COVENANT:

ITS HISTORY, NATURE, CONTINUED OBLIGATION, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF ITS GREAT PRINCIPLES AT THE PRESENT TIME.

The following Lecture on the Solemn League and Covenant is added to complete the volume, as it contains a fuller account of the history, contents, and ends of the Covenant than is found in the foregoing "Narrative:"—

Substance of a Public Lecture, delivered at the close of the Session of the Reformed Presbyterian Theological Hall, Wednesday evening, September 30, 1868, by Professor Houston.

I. *History of the Solemn League.*

THE time in the history of these nations—225 years ago—in which the Solemn League and Covenant was framed, and soon after joyfully taken by persons of all ranks throughout the three kingdoms, was a period of no ordinary peril to the interests of true religion and to the cause of British liberty. Some five years before, the Scottish nation, moved by a sacred and powerful impulse from on high, had risen up, actuated by one heart and will, and had thrown off the yoke of Prelacy and arbitrary power. The National Covenant, in an enlarged form, was solemnly sworn and subscribed by some 60,000 persons, in a few days, in Edinburgh, in the commencement of the sacred struggle. To use the words of two prominent actors in the mighty movement—"This was the day of the Lord's power, in which multitudes offered themselves willingly, like the dew drops of the morning."¹ Livingstone, who was an eye witness of some of the scenes of covenanting that followed throughout the kingdom, declares—"All the people generally and most willingly concurred. I have seen more than 1000 persons all at once lifting up their hands, and the tears falling down from their eyes; so that throughout the whole land,

¹ First reply of Alexander Henderson and David Dickson to the Doctors of Aberdeen.

excepting professed Papists and some few who adhered to the Prelates, people universally entered into the covenant of God.”

At the famous General Assembly, held in Glasgow towards the close of the same year, the Bishops' "Doom" was pronounced; Prelacy, with its usurped rule and manifold corruptions, was cast out of the Church, and Presbyterian Church Government was fully established. The intrepid spirit of the Scottish leaders, emboldened by a conscious sense of sacred vows and of the goodness of their cause, prevailed against hosts of powerful enemies. After two attempts by arms, of Charles and his Episcopal advisers, to bring the Scottish nation again under the yoke of Prelacy and arbitrary power, and after various acts of duplicity and perfidy, the king was obliged, in 1641, to ratify in Parliament the covenant, and the acts of the Glasgow Assembly, and thus to give a public sanction to the proceedings of the Covenanters. Still, notwithstanding these auspicious beginnings, there were great difficulties before those who desired to see the Church secured in the possession of intrinsic power and spiritual independence, and the State, constituted on a scriptural basis, in friendly alliance and co-operation with the Church. The friends of civil and religious liberty in England, after many fruitless attempts in Parliament to obtain legal securities for their inalienable rights, were compelled to submit their quarrel to the dread arbitrament of war. The power of the English Parliament and people was at first weak, and their prospects of success doubtful. Charles had gained over to his side in Scotland Montrose, and other leaders throughout the Highlands, and in other parts of the kingdom. The sudden rising of the Papists, and the massacre of vast numbers of Protestants in Ireland, horrified the nation. The discovery of a correspondence of the king with Montrose when a prisoner in Edinburgh, and his known favour to the leaders of the Irish rebellion, increased the alarm. The kingdom appeared to be on the brink of a civil war. Everything in public affairs bore a threatening and ominous aspect to the cause of religious freedom, and to the constitutional liberties of the nation.

At this crisis, when the General Assembly met in Edinburgh, on the 3d of August 1643, their first business was to appoint a day of solemn fasting and prayer for Divine guidance. Alexander Henderson, as the skilful pilot in a stormy sea, was chosen moderator. The Westminster Assembly, convened by order of the Long Parliament, had commenced its proceedings

more than a month before, but had made little progress. At an opportune juncture, two sets of English Commissioners arrived in Edinburgh—the one from the English Parliament to the Scottish Convention of Estates, to seek aid in the war with the king, and the other from the Westminster Assembly to the General Assembly, to solicit help in carrying forward the work of reformation. The response to this application was the proposal and resolution to frame a mutual bond defining the grounds on which the assistance sought should be rendered, and the principles on which the two nations should co-operate in the struggle for liberty. All that the English Commissioners sought was a Civil League; but as the entire contest in Scotland had been of a religious character, and had been eminently successful, through the felt obligation of the National Covenant, the Scottish Convention and the General Assembly equally insisted that the proposed league should be of a religious nature. It was ultimately agreed on both sides that the bond of union between the two nations should be partly civil and partly religious. On the 17th of August, the draft of the Solemn League and Covenant, prepared by Henderson, was submitted to the General Assembly and adopted unanimously, amidst the openly expressed applause of some, and the bursting tears and full joy of others. Justly did Baillie declare, in his quaint but expressive manner—“This seems to be a new period, and crisis of the most great affair, which these three hundred years has been exercised in these dominions.”

The covenant, having received the approval of the Convention of Estates, was carried by the Commissioners to the English Parliament and to the Westminster Assembly. After some slight alterations, it was approved, sworn, and subscribed in the most solemn manner by the House of Commons on the 25th of September. Of the 228 names in the Parliamentary roll that are subscribed to the covenant, that of Oliver Cromwell is found early. On the 15th of October, the covenant was taken with like solemnity by the House of Lords. On the following Lord's day, it was administered in all the congregations in and around London. In February following, an order of Parliament was issued, enjoining the covenant to be taken by all persons throughout England, who had sufficient knowledge, above the age of eighteen years. This order was accompanied by a suitable exhortation of the Assembly of Divines. The covenant was enjoined to be publicly read in every congregation throughout the kingdom

on every day of public fasting and humiliation. Foreign English Protestants were invited to join with their brethren in England in this sacred league, and some Continental Churches expressed their readiness to engage in the same holy confederation. If some stringent penalties were annexed to the order for taking the covenant, as issued by the rulers in Scotland, these were designed chiefly to affect the Royalist faction, who were plotting against the liberties of the nation. This was the act of the civil and not of the ecclesiastical authorities, and it proceeded on the principle that the bond thus enforced was not merely a religious covenant, but also a civil league. With the utmost unanimity the Solemn League was taken throughout all Scotland. It was ratified by the Act of the Scottish Parliament in 1644; it was renewed by persons of all ranks at the close of the Second Reformation in 1648, with an Acknowledgment of Sins and Engagement to Duties appended; and again by the Scottish Parliament in 1649.

The covenant was designed to be a bond of union, and the basis of reformation in the three kingdoms. Accordingly, in the year 1644, it was generally administered throughout the north of Ireland by four ministers, who were deputed for this purpose by the General Assembly in Scotland. It is testified by Adair, a contemporary historian, and admitted by Bishop Mant, that, in Ireland, the taking of the covenant was very generally welcomed by officers, soldiers, and the people. No constraint was employed. It was carefully explained before any were admitted to swear it. Some were held back till they had obtained more knowledge, and the only complaint was that the ministers were "over-scrupulous" in admitting persons to subscribe. Adair says, "The covenant was taken in all places with great affection, partly with sorrow for former judgments and sins and miseries, partly with joy under present consolation, in the hopes of laying a foundation for the work of God in the land, and overthrowing Popery and Prelacy, which had been the havoc and ruin of that poor Church. The solemnity and spirituality of carrying on this work was like the cloud filling the Temple, there being a new tabernacle erecting in the land."¹

Though the Solemn League and Covenant was misrepresented and vilified in former times by writers and classes of different views, and though it is still misunderstood and reproached in our own day, it justly deserves the commendation

¹ *History*, pp. 103, 104.

of Hetherington, the historian of the Westminster Assembly—“The most important of man’s interests for time and eternity were included within its ample scope, and made the subjects of a solemn league with each other, and of a sacred covenant with God.” He styles it further, “A document the noblest, in its spiritual nature and principles, of all that are recorded among the international transactions of the world ;” and again, “As the wisest, sublimest, and most sacred document ever framed by uninspired men.”¹

II. *The Influence of the Covenant on British Theology.*

The history of the progress and prosperity of the British Empire has been said to be the history of the English Bible. The Solemn League and Covenant, in like manner, may be justly regarded not only as the basis of the remarkable spread and power of evangelical religion in Britain in the last half of the seventeenth century, but likewise as intimately connected with the development of constitutional principles of civil government, and with the successful efforts that were made at that memorable period in behalf of the cause of civil liberty. Guizot, the celebrated French statesman and historian, speaking of the Westminster Assembly, whose existence may be traced to the renewal of the National Covenant, and whose principal measures were, to a great extent, influenced and directed by the Solemn League, says—“It founded the power of the Commons, and caused English society to take a wide step from the monstrous inequality of the Feudal System.”²

The salutary influence of the Solemn League is noticeable in the following particulars—First. The Westminster Assembly was powerfully influenced in its most important proceedings by the covenant. The first ten weeks of the Assembly’s meeting were spent in debates on the first fifteen of the thirty-nine Articles of the Episcopal Church of England. On the arrival of the Scottish Commissioners, or rather soon after the signing of the covenant, a new direction was given to the whole course of the discussion. The Divine and lay assessors rose to a loftier conception of the great work of preparing the doctrinal standards, and settling the government and order of the British Church. They felt the impression of solemn vows, and they were thus

¹ Hetherington’s *History of Westminster Assembly*, pp. 133, 134.

² Guizot’s *History of the English Revolution*.

prepared for accomplishing a service in their own day, and for future generations, such as has never been excelled or equalled in any other reformed Church or nation. It is not too much to say that we mainly owe to the Solemn League and Covenant our admirable Westminster Standards; the Confession, Catechisms, Form of Church Government, and Directory for Worship. This is a chief part of the union and uniformity which were aimed at in convening the Assembly, and which the Covenanters pledged themselves to labour to attain in an explicit article of the covenant. To those Presbyterians who boast of the Confession and Catechisms, and of Presbyterian order, while yet they repudiate the continued obligation of the British covenants, it deserves to be told, that, but for the Solemn League and Covenant, so far as we can see, these Standards would not have been prepared, and would not have reached that high degree of completeness which confessedly characterizes them.

Secondly. The writings of the most distinguished Puritan Divines of the era of the Commonwealth, and of the Nonconformist trials and sufferings, were not a little influenced by the principles and spirit of the Solemn League and Covenant. It is worthy of remark, that leading divines of the Congregational party, such as Goodwin, Nye, Owen, Burroughs, and others, held the obligation of the covenant, as in their doctrinal views they were in complete agreement with the Westminster Standards. They frequently refer to the covenant in their writings, lament its violation, and call the nation to repentance. If these Puritan and Nonconformist divines have been properly regarded as "giants in theology," this we may fairly ascribe, next to their deep and prayerful study of the Divine Word, to the great principles which they imbibed from the Solemn League and Covenant, and to the spirit of entire dedication to Christ and his service which was inspired by the sacred engagement.

Thirdly. To this, too, is it in a great measure owing that British theology in these and other lands, even to our own day, has stood forth, nobly distinguished for its evangelical character, unity, sturdy growth, and manly vigour, in opposition to the errors, vain conceits, and rationalistic follies of Germany and other lands. To a very wide extent throughout English-speaking countries, the Westminster Standards have been diffused, and in recent years this diffusion has been rapid throughout distant nations. Some Continental Churches, and

Churches of converted heathens, to some extent, have received the doctrine, and adopted the order held forth in these venerable documents. The Solemn League and Covenant, and the Confession of Faith compiled through its influence, form the sacred "Banner" which the Captain of Salvation gave to his servants to "display because of truth." In all times of the mustering of the Lord's host for the conflict with error, defection, and ungodliness—in every period of revival in the Church—this standard has been unfolded, and multitudes have willingly gathered around it. Its past achievements warrant the joyful hope of future victory. We cannot doubt that, in the words of the venerable Stevenson of Ayr, in his "*Plea for the Covenanted Reformation*," the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, as a part of our covenanted uniformity, will yet be the "Rallying Post" around which will be collected the scattered Churches of the Reformation in these and other lands!

III. *The Perpetual Moral Obligation of the Covenant.*

The *continued obligation* of the Solemn League and Covenant rests on solid and unassailable grounds. Some writers, such as Dr Reid, in his "*History of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland*," speak of the covenant as having been useful at the time when it was framed; and represent the taking of it as productive of the most salutary effects in this country, and in England and Scotland. But they speak of it, at the same time, as having served its purpose, and as of little or no value to the Church and the nation in succeeding ages. In opposition to such a view, we maintain that the Solemn League, like the National Covenant, was in the fullest sense a great national deed. It was the oath of God, binding the nation to the Supreme Ruler, and men of all ranks in the State and the Church to one another, in the bond of a sacred engagement. As said an illustrious martyr—the Marquis of Argyle—"God hath laid engagements upon the nation; we are tied by the covenant to religion and reformation; and it is beyond the power of all magistrates under heaven to absolve them from the oath of God."

Moral and religious covenants are essential, not merely to the *well-being*, but even to the *very existence* of all well-ordered society. The usages of every civilized community confirm the doctrine of superadded obligation arising from oaths and

voluntary engagements. The obligation of social covenants is not so much a *descending* obligation as that which rests upon the same body, in different stages of its corporate existence. National society, under law to God, has a *permanent* identity. Covenants that are moral in their nature are of *perpetual* obligation. Posterity were properly included in them when they were framed. In fulfilling social engagements, it is not so much one class of persons discharging the obligations that were come under by another, as society represented by different persons in different stages of its existence, performing its own permanent obligation. It has been ably shown that compacts, promises, and oaths are universally regarded as binding, not only upon those who personally make them, but likewise upon those whom they lawfully represent, until the objects which they contemplate have been fully attained. In public religious vows, God being the one party, and the Church and the nation the other, these parties have a continued existence. Notwithstanding the changes that take place in the constituent members of the one party, the obligation is perpetual, as the identity of corporate bodies remains unaltered. The Solemn League and Covenant bound the parties who entered into it to the performance of *moral* and *scriptural duties*, and it was, in the strictest sense, a *national deed*. On these grounds, we hold that the nation's scriptural vow and oath against Prelacy and arbitrary power—in maintenance of constitutional government, based on the Word of God, and supporting the true religion—the solemn engagement to promote the unity of the Church and the nation, in the one reformed faith—to seek uniformity in religious worship and order, and to walk in all holy living, each going before another in a blessed reformation—is yet binding upon men of all classes in these lands, as it will be, in future generations, till the great ends of the covenant shall have been fully attained—till the nation and its rulers shall assemble to serve the highest Lord, and our land be yet again a land “married to the Lord,” and a land “delighted in.” In the fervid language of an excellent historian, we would ask, “Has the covenant perished amid the strife of tongues, has it sunk into oblivion, and ceased to be a living element in the quick realm of thought? Are there none by whom it is still regarded with sacred veneration? Is it not true that, at this very moment, there are many minds of great power and energy engaged in reviving its mighty principles, and fearlessly holding them forth before the world's startled gaze? And if such

be the case, may it not be, that what two hundred years ago was premature, has now nearly reached the period of its full maturity, and is on the point of raising up its sacred and majestic head, strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might?"¹

IV. *The Nature and Contents of the Solemn League and Covenant.*

The contents of the Covenant are a Preface, six Articles, and a Conclusion. These show clearly its leading *objects*, and the *means* by which it is proposed to accomplish them, and they are every way deserving of attention.

Article First is—1. An engagement to maintain the reformed religion in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government, as founded solely on the Word of God; 2. To seek the reformation of religion in England and Ireland after the example of the best reformed Churches; and 3. To bring the Churches of God in the three kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in religion. Could there be any objects more important to the prosperity of the Church, and the advancement of true religion than these?

Article Second binds to "the extirpation of Popery, Prelacy, superstition, heresy, schism, profaneness, and whatsoever is found contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness." This clause has been frequently quoted to prove that the principles of the covenant are intolerant and persecuting. It has been interpreted, as if it were a solemn engagement to extirpate by violence Papists and Ritualists. The words of the covenant itself are a sufficient refutation of this slander. After the particulars enumerated, they say, by way of explanation—"that is, Church government by archbishops, bishops, &c.;" meaning plainly that their engagement was to extirpate *unscriptural systems and practices*, and not persons. What they vow to labour for, they propose to effect by scriptural means. It is surely the Church's duty to endeavour to root out all superstition, heresy, schism, and profaneness. And if Popery and Prelacy are without warrant in the Word of God, as every Presbyterian must believe, it must be a solemn duty to labour for their extirpation. In the exhortation of the Westminster Divines for taking the covenant, it is expressly said respecting

¹ Hetherington's *Hist. of Westminster Assembly*, pp. 133, 134.

this clause—"Nor is any man hereby bound to offer violence to their persons; but in his place and calling to endeavour their extirpation in a lawful way." It stands on undeniable historical evidence that, when the supreme power of the nation was in the hands of those who swore the covenant, none suffered in their person or property merely on religious grounds. The means which they employed for extirpating error and profaneness were moral and scriptural. Though themselves hated, oppressed, and persecuted, our covenanted forefathers never persecuted.

In *Article Third* the Covenanters engage to maintain the rights and liberties of the king and Parliament in the preservation and defence of true religion, and the liberties of the kingdom. This article fully frees our forefathers from the reproach of being of anti-government and extravagant principles. It shows them to have been actuated by the purest patriotism, and well acquainted with the fundamental principles of constitutional government and genuine liberty. Civil liberty was based by them on religious freedom. Allegiance to the sovereign was limited and regulated by a paramount regard to the liberties and best interests of the nation. Our covenanted forefathers were patriots of the noblest kind—intelligent, upright, and manly—and while fervently loving their country, they embraced in their warmest sympathies the interests of the universal family of man. By the nation's solemn vow, both rulers and ruled were to be guided by a paramount regard to the defence and promotion of true religion. This was to some extent the fundamental principle of the revolution settlement—the principle on which, however overlooked and misapplied, are based the liberties of the British nation.

The engagements in *Article Fourth*—to discover and punish malignants and incendiaries in an orderly and legal manner—was evidently of a temporary nature. It was a necessary protection at the time against men who were illegally aiding and abetting in overthrowing the Constitution, and destroying the liberties of the nation. The wisdom of this stringent clause was afterwards clearly evinced, when by the unhappy "Public Resolutions," the malignants were brought into places of power and trust; and when, under the reigns of the infamous "Royal Brothers," they subverted the reformed Constitution—trampled down to the ground the liberties, civil and religious, of the nation, and shed the blood of thousands of Christ's faithful servants.

The two last Articles—the *Fifth* and *Sixth*—bind such as enter into the covenant to endeavour, according to their places, that the three kingdoms may remain in firm peace and union to all posterity—and pledge them to mutual defence and assistance, and to fraternal union in advancing the principles of the covenant. What a strong safeguard does such a bond furnish against all divisive and revolutionary courses! What an admirable basis is here for union and co-operation in the Church, and for promoting the common good!

The *Conclusion* shows how intensely our fathers were concerned for godly practice—how deeply they felt a sense of the Divine presence in their proceedings, and their awful responsibility—and how they ever confessed their need of the Spirit's guidance and support in carrying out their endeavours. With all solemnity they say—"We declare our true and unfeigned purpose, desire, and endeavour for ourselves and all others under our power and charge—both in public and private, in all duties we owe to God and man—to amend our lives, and each one to go before another in the example of a real reformation—that the Lord may turn away his wrath and heavy indignation, and establish these kingdoms in truth and peace."

V. *Importance of the Grand Principles of the Solemn League and Covenant at the present time.*

Long has the covenant been misrepresented—covered with obloquy and reproach, and buried in almost universal neglect. Systems abjured in the covenant, and rejected by the nation, have been established by law and exalted to power. It has frequently appeared hopeless to expect the British nation or Churches to call to remembrance the nation's sacred vows; or that the great object of our fathers' faithful struggles would ever be attained; and that the Church and people of the three kingdoms would be joined together in a scriptural profession, a firm peace, and happy uniformity. Yet may we not despair. There are significant tokens, not a few, that systems and those who uphold them, that are opposed to the covenant, are judged and condemned, that the Lord is about to raise up again his buried work of reformation, and that many will yet go up to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, "Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord, in a perpetual covenant, not to be forgotten." On

many grounds the exhibition of the grand principles of the Solemn League and Covenant is greatly important at the present time. A brief and cursory notice of a few must suffice—

1. The remarkable *salutary effects*, resulting from the framing and taking of the covenant, convey to us most important instruction. It proved the instrument of wondrous deliverance from numerous great and overwhelming evils. It was a breast-work against Jesuitical plots, Prelatical tyranny and corruption, arbitrary power, and prevalent ungodliness and immorality. It united the friends of truth in firm concord, healed divisions in the Churches, promoted a powerful revival and spread of evangelical doctrine, advanced the cause of genuine liberty and constitutional freedom, and made Britain and the Churches therein what it was termed at the time, a "*Philadelphia*" among Protestant nations and Churches. If such were the effects in a time of great public confusion, and immense threatened dangers in the history of these lands, may we not hope that, by a general return to solemn federal dedication, divisions that cause "great searchings of heart" may be healed, threatened dangers averted, great evils brought down, and that, on their removal, the Lord shall yet return and leave a blessing behind?

2. The only way in which the aggressions of Popery can be effectually resisted, and its countless errors, idolatries, and oppressions banished, is by having recourse to such a public federal deed as the Solemn League and Covenant. The grand principle of the covenant is the scriptural command—"What thing soever I command you, observe to do it; thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it." (Deut. xii. 32.) This is diametrically opposed to the whole system of Antichrist. There is vast and increasing danger to the religion and liberties of this nation by the spread of Popery, the favour shown to its active agents by statesmen of all parties, and through the weak, timid, and unavailing opposition made to it by the British Churches. The progress of Popish doctrine, worship, and superstition in the national Church of England is, in a high degree, alarming. The methods hitherto tried to arrest the wide-spreading evil have proved unavailing. Good men have been brought to see and confess this. At a great Protestant meeting, held some years ago in Manchester, an eloquent leading minister of the English Church declared that the only effectual way for Protestants to resist the inroads of Popery was by means

of a "Solemn League and Covenant" to maintain scriptural truth, unite together in brotherly concord, and resolutely resist all antichristian error and idolatry, whether held by avowed Romanists, or found in Protestant Churches. Other methods of resisting Popish machination and aggression have hitherto failed, and are likely to fail, so long as the leaven of Antichrist is allowed to spread unchecked throughout Protestant Churches—so long as British Protestants are not pledged in a sacred bond to contend earnestly for the common faith, and united in fraternal affection—so long as the members of Protestant Churches range themselves under different political leaders, who are all equally pledged by solemn oath to uphold a system abjured in the covenant, and who, for selfish ends, or on the ground of political expediency, vie with one another in making concessions and extending special favours to the interested supporters of the Papacy. It is significant and noteworthy, that while in late years Popish error, idolatry, and superstition have openly spread in the Prelatical Church, and perversions to Romanism by hundreds have taken place among its ministers and more influential members, the perverts from the dissenting Churches have been so few as hardly to be named; while in Scotland, and among those who approach to anything like regard to the principles of the covenant, the active agents of Popery have confessed that they can make no progress.

3. Revived attention to the Solemn League and Covenant, and especially a sense of its continued obligation, afford the most satisfactory solution of the great question of the day concerning the withdrawal of State endowments from certain Churches, and the disestablishment of the Prelatical Church. Instead of discussing this question on mere political grounds, or considering at length the great principles involved in it, we offer a few plain statements which are susceptible of the fullest illustration, and which cannot be controverted.

(1.) The *Presbyterian endowment* would not have been given at first to those who were known to hold fast the principles and obligation of the Solemn League and Covenant. Nor would it have been received if the ministers who accepted it had held faithfully their own and their fathers' vows. Charles II., on his restoration, openly renounced the covenant, ordered it to be publicly burned, and persecuted to the death faithful Covenanters; and in cases not a few, declared adherence to the covenant by the Scottish confessors and martyrs, when shot in the fields, and executed on scaffolds, was a main ground

of their suffering to the death. Can it be believed that the same infamous monarch would have given, as a special mark of his royal favour, a dole out of the *secret service* money to Presbyterian ministers in this country, if he had not regarded them as having relinquished the oath of the covenant, and as having abandoned the grand principles of the covenanted religion? To a certainty, they would not have accepted the corrupting bribe, if they had sympathized with the suffering Presbyterians in Scotland, or been identified with their noble testimony.

The same is true in relation to the increased Royal bounty under the third William. In the Establishment at the Revolution, the covenants and laws passed in favour of the Second Reformation were left condemned and abrogated under the Act Rescissory. Presbytery was established in a thoroughly Erastian form in Scotland, and Prelacy in England and Ireland. The increased Royal bounty was given to those who tamely acquiesced, without protest or remonstrance, in such a settlement, and who thus abandoned completely the ground of the Second Reformation, and renounced altogether the obligation of the Solemn League and Covenant. The present form of the Presbyterian Endowment is, moreover, palpably opposed to the principles and spirit of the covenant, and to the faithful contendings of our Presbyterian forefathers. The Establishment, for which its leading advocates plead, is unscriptural and totally different from that for which the Scottish reformers and martyrs contended unto blood; and the principle on which present endowments are conferred—low political expediency, truth and error being equally favoured—is diametrically opposed to all the fundamental articles of their noble testimony.

It is altogether right, that what ought never to have been accepted should now be taken away. Its removal will be every way beneficial in detaching the Church from an ensnaring alliance with a corrupt State, leading ministers and people to appreciate more highly the sacred vows of the nation, and the principles of the covenanted reformation, and drawing forth the liberality of the Church for the support of the ministry and the diffusion of the Gospel. Much is yet to be done by the Presbyterian body for the revival of true religion among its adherents—the reclaiming of the neglected masses, and the evangelization of the whole land. By its disendowment a new career of activity and usefulness will be opened for the Presby-

terian Church. We cannot doubt that, freed from State-dependence, this course will conduct to a large measure of increase and spiritual prosperity.

(2.) Holding, as we do fully, the perpetual moral obligation of the Solemn League and Covenant, we cannot but decidedly declare in favour of the complete *disestablishment* of the Prelatical Church. It is absurd and infatuated to maintain, as many of the dignitaries and professed friends of the Episcopal Church now do, that to disestablish the Church is to destroy Protestantism. What is truthful, spiritual, and vital in the national Church has been confined and hindered in its salutary operation, by such an Establishment as has long existed; and the disestablishment will only set it free, and open the way for devoted men vigorously betaking themselves to the proper works of the Church's spiritual mission. The Parliament that convened the Westminster Assembly, in both its houses, condemned Prelacy as "an evil justly offensive and burdensome to the kingdom, a great impediment to the growth of religion, and very prejudicial to the State and government of the kingdom." The covenant embodied and gave expression to the nation's protest against this unscriptural and oppressive system, and solemnly bound those who entered into it to labour for its extirpation. We are constrained, notwithstanding the high respect we cherish towards many excellent men in the ministry and membership of the Prelatical Church, to take the same ground, and to plead for its total disestablishment.

4. The revival of the Solemn League and Covenant is finally important and valuable to the Protestant Churches, and to the cause of true religion, in our day, on various other grounds—

(1.) As a bond *for the preservation and defence of civil and religious liberty*. This is of vast importance at all times—it is unspeakably so at present, when the advancing power and influence of Popery seriously threaten the liberties of the nation; and when, by the enlarged extension of the suffrage, the power of Government may come, to a great extent, into the hands of multitudes that are ignorant, untaught, and destitute of moral and religious principle. Never were the great principles of constitutional liberty more plainly and fully declared than is done in the covenant. Civil liberty is regarded as founded on, and inseparable from religious purity and freedom. The basis of both is declared to be the Word of God. Whatever true freedom Britain and America enjoy,

they are largely indebted for it to the fundamental principles of the covenant. By reviving and diffusing these, we may largely extend the blessings of true liberty—

“He is a freeman whom the truth makes free,
And all are slaves besides.”

(2.) As an eminent means of diffusing *evangelical truth and extending reformation*. A chief design of the covenant when first framed and taken was to extend the reformation that had been happily attained in Scotland to England and Ireland. Alexander Henderson cherished the design of making the Solemn League a basis of union and co-operation between Britain and the Reformed Churches and States on the Continent of Europe. Dr Duff, one of the greatest of living missionaries, says he was led in early life to devote himself to Christ's work from hearing read, every Sabbath night, in his father's house, the memorials of the martyrs of the covenant in the “*Scottish Worthies*.” When the principles of the Solemn League and Covenant shall be duly appreciated, and its obligation generally felt, the work of Christian missions, both at home and abroad, shall be greatly furthered. The sanctified energies of the Church shall be called forth, and dedicated offerings shall be plentifully supplied for advancing the cause of truth in the earth. Many, as in the primitive European Churches, under the impression of covenant vows, will “first give themselves to the Lord, and then to his servants by the will of God,” for the propagation of his light and salvation throughout the nations. “He shall live, and to Him shall be given of the gold of Sheba; prayer also shall be made for Him continually; and daily shall He be praised.”

(3.) It is the best and most approved *means of union throughout the Churches*. In marked contrast with many present schemes of union, it seeks a union in the Spirit, in truth and love. In perilous times it was the means of uniting the Churches of Britain, in the way of a happy uniformity, in profession, and worship, and practice. As in apostolic times, they “were of one heart and mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel.” They “continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and in fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayer.” Such a blessed union was once attained in these lands, notwithstanding great difficulties and manifold opposition. There is nothing to hinder, but that it may yet be reached on a larger scale, and to a far wider extent. We are called, in the present

momentous period, to hold forth the covenant as the basis of union—as the “Rallying Standard”—to the Evangelical Protestant Churches—“The Lord shall be King over all the earth. His name shall be one and his praise one.”

(4.) Finally, it will prove an eminent means of *reviving true piety, and of advancing practical godliness*. Such an instrument is greatly needed in our day in all the Churches. Past times of covenanting have ever been seasons of gracious powerful revival of religion. Such they were under the First Reformation in 1596—at the renewal of the National Covenant in 1638—at the taking of the Solemn League in England and Scotland in 1643—and in Ireland in 1644. The general diffusion and embracing of its principles, and the prevalence of the spirit of covenant-dedication, will yet be the means of powerful spiritual quickening, and will lead forward the Church to future glorious triumphs. In the words of the illustrious martyr, James Guthrie, we may affirm with all confidence—“The covenants will yet be the reviving of—not Scotland alone, but of Britain and of the world.”

Let us seek to understand fully and appreciate the grand principles of the covenant, cherish a constant and deep sense of its continued obligation, labour earnestly and perseveringly to diffuse the truths which it exhibits—fundamental alike to the well-being of civil and ecclesiastical society—and anticipate joyfully the return of the Church and the nation to covenant allegiance to the reigning Mediator.

A P P E N D I X.

I.—PERMANENT OBLIGATION OF THE SOLEMN LEAGUE AND COVENANT.

IT is not unusual at present to find individuals and religious parties expressing respect for the Solemn League and Covenant, and admiration of those who entered into it in a bypast age, and yet, at the same time, altogether refusing to admit its permanent obligation. This does Dr Reid virtually in his *History of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland*; and Presbyterians who incorporate with a civil system which is essentially unscriptural, Prelatic, and Erastian, are of necessity obliged to take the same position. The late venerable Dr M'Crie, in his *Discourses on the Unity of the Church*, pp. 164, 165, thus ably shows the grounds of maintaining the continued obligation of this memorable bond :—“The permanent obligation of the Solemn League results from the permanency of its nature and design, and of the parties entering into it, taken in connection with the public capacity in which it was established. Some talk of it as if it were a mere temporary expedient to which our forefathers had recourse in defending their civil and religious liberties; and when they have paid a compliment to it in this point of view, they think they have no more concern with the matter. This is a very narrow and mistaken view of the deed. The most momentous transactions, and deeply and durably affecting the welfare and the duty of nations and of churches, may be traced to the influence of the extraordinary and energetic circumstances of a particular period. The emergency which led to the formation of the Covenant is one thing, and the obligation of that Covenant is quite another: the former might quickly pass away, while the latter may be permanent and perpetual. Nor is the obligation of the Covenant to be determined by the temporary or changeable nature of its subordinate and accessory articles. Whatever may be said of some of the things engaged to in the Solemn League, there cannot be a doubt that, in its great design and leading articles, it was not temporary but permanent. Though the objects immediately contemplated by it—religious reformation and uniformity—had been accomplished, it would still have continued to oblige those who were under its bond to adhere to and maintain those attainments. But unhappily there is no need of having recourse to this line of argument: its grand stipulations remain to this day unfulfilled. The Solemn League was a national covenant and oath, in every point of view—in its matter, its form, the authority by which it was enjoined, the capacities in which it was sworn, and the manner in which it was ratified. It was a sacred league between kingdom and kingdom, in respect to their religious as well as their secular interests; and, at the same time, a covenant in which they jointly swore to God to

perform all the articles contained in it. National religion, national safety, liberty, and peace, were the great objects which it embraced. It was not a mere agreement or confederation (however solemn) of individuals or private persons (however numerous), entering spontaneously and of their own accord into a common engagement. It was framed and concluded by the representatives of kingdoms, in concurrence with those of the Church; it was sworn by them in their public capacity; at their call and by their authority, it was afterwards sworn by the body of the people in their different ranks and orders; and, finally, it was ratified and pronounced valid by laws both civil and ecclesiastical. The public faith was thus plighted by all the organs through which a nation is accustomed to express its mind and will. Nothing was wanting to complete the national tie, and to render it permanent, unless it should be maintained that absolute unanimity is necessary, and that a society cannot contract lawful engagements to God or man as long as there are individuals who oppose and are disobedient. Sanctions less sacred, and pledges less numerous, would have given another nation, or even an individual, a perfect right to demand from Britain the fulfilment of any treaty or contract; and shall not God, who was not only a witness but the principal Party, and whose honour and interest were immediately concerned in this transaction, have a like claim; or shall we 'break the covenant and escape?'"

II.—COVENANT OF 1557.

The Bond or Covenant framed at this time—sometimes designated the "*Godly Band*"—was more full and explicit than some other of the social religious engagements that were entered into in the early period of the Scottish Reformation. As an example of approved scriptural vowing for future times, it deserves to be preserved on distinct record:—

"We, perceiving how Satan in his members, the Antichrists of our time, cruelly doth rage, seeking to downthrow and destroy the Evangel of Christ and his Congregation, ought, according to our bounden duty, to strive in our Master's cause, even unto the death, being certain of the victory in Him; the which, our duty being well-considered, we do promise, before the Majesty of God and his Congregation, that we, by his grace, shall, with all diligence, apply our whole power, substance, and our very lives, to maintain, set forward, and establish, the most blessed Word of God and his Congregation; and shall labour at our possibility to have faithful ministers, purely and truly to minister Christ's Evangel and Sacraments to his people. We shall maintain them, nourish them, and defend them, the whole Congregation of Christ, and every member thereof, at our whole powers and waiving (expending) of our lives against Satan and all wicked power that does intend tyranny and trouble against the foresaid Congregation. Unto the which holy Word and Congregation we do join us; and also do renounce and forsake the congregation of Satan, with all the superstitions, abominations, and idolatry thereof. And, moreover, shall declare ourselves manifestly enemies thereto, by this our faithful promise before God, testified to his Congregation, by our subscription at these presents. At Edinburgh, the 3rd day of December, 1557 years. God called to witness."²

This Bond or Covenant was subscribed by the Earls of Argyle, Glencairn,

² Knox's *History of the Reformation in Scotland*, vol. i. pp. 273-74; Wodrow Society Edition.

and Morton ; Archibald, Lord of Lorn, John Erskine of Dun, and a great number of other distinguished men among the lesser barons and influential country gentlemen. From the repeated recurrence of the word *Congregation* in this document, the chief subscribers were after this called Lords of the Congregation ; and the people who adhered to them were called the Congregation.¹

III.—NATIONAL COVENANTS MAY BE RENEWED NOT IN A NATIONAL CAPACITY ; AND THE SEASONABLENESS OF THE DUTY.

The following statements, extracted from the Doctrinal Part of the *Testimony of the Original Seceders*, on these subjects, are judicious and deserving of serious attention :—

“ In opposition to those who deny that National Covenants can be renewed unless it be done nationally, WE DECLARE—

“ That as, in national vows for promoting religious reformation in countries where the Church is in an organized state, she is supposed to take the lead in the service, the civil authorities of the nation, and the body of the people concurring with her, and entering into the oaths ; and as these vows are binding in all moral respects, not only upon the nation as a whole, but also upon the several parts of which it is composed : so it must be competent to the Church, or any part of her adhering to the covenanted cause, though a minority of the nation, when the majority, including their rulers, refuse to concur in the service, to renew these vows ecclesiastically, by recognizing their continued obligation, and entering into a bond, suited to her circumstances, to prosecute the ends of them.

“ In support of the above statement we observe, That the renewal of national covenants, even by a minority of the nation which originally entered into them, is sanctioned by the approved example of God’s ancient people : that all their covenanting with God, after they entered the land of Canaan, reduplicated upon the federal transaction of the twelve tribes at Horeb : that after the apostasy of the ten tribes, the tribe of Judah, though a minority of the original nation of Israel which covenanted at Horeb, renewed that covenant in the days of Asa, Jehoiada, Hezekiah, and Josiah ; and that this was done by them not only when they had a king of their own nation to take a lead in the service, but also when under a foreign yoke, as appears from the covenanting of the captives after their return from Babylon.²

“ In opposition to those who deny the present *seasonableness of public religious covenanting*, or who leave it undecided whether it is seasonable at present or not, WE DECLARE—

“ That although public religious covenanting is not an ordinary duty, yet it is a service eminently called for at present from the circumstances of the Church and the nation to which we belong.

“ In support of this assertion we observe, That nature itself teaches, that if we have violated a lawful covenant, it is dutiful to renew it, with an acknowledgment of our sin in having broken it : that all ranks in these lands having departed in principle and practice from a reformation formerly attained, and violated the vows by which it was consolidated, the renovation

¹ Hetherington’s *History of Church of Scotland*, vol. i. p. 54.

² 2 Chron. xv. 12-15 ; xxiii. 16 ; xxix. 10 ; xxxiv. 29-31 ; Neh. ix. 38 ; x.

of these is highly seasonable as a means of awakening the present generation to a sense of their sin and danger, and of exciting them to remember whence they have fallen, and to do the first works: that as one end of social covenanting is the confirmation of Christians in the present truth, so it must be a seasonable service at present, when the great body of Christians are like children tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, and when error is coming in upon the Church like a flood: that the great alienation of affection and mutual jealousies which prevail among professed Christians call loudly for this service, as a means eminently calculated to restore public confidence, to heal divisions, and to cement religious society: that as all ranks in these lands are bound by the vows of their ancestors to adhere to the Westminster formularies as standards of uniformity, and as there is a strong tendency at present to union, to the prejudice of these standards; so to counteract that tendency, and to give the disposition for union a proper direction, the friends of the Reformation have a special call to renew the pledge of adherence to them given by their reforming ancestors: that as public religious covenanting was a means remarkably blessed by God in the days of our fathers, for delivering these lands from antichristian tyranny and superstition, and for carrying on a work of reformation; so the danger to which the Reformation interest in these lands is exposed, from the rapid increase of Popery, and the countenance it is receiving from persons of all ranks, is a special call in Providence to all the friends of the Reformation, to come forward and renew the federal deeds of our ancestors, which have so often proved the bulwarks of our civil and religious liberties, as a special means of preventing us from being again brought under the yoke of Rome: finally, that it is the business of the Church to point out the seasons when this duty is specially called for, and doctrinally and judicially to inculcate the practice of it; and that to admit its morality, and yet to leave the seasonableness of it undetermined, or to make the performance or non-performance of it matter of judicial forbearance, is to act in direct opposition to the commandment of Christ, 'Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you' (Matt. xxviii. 20)."

IV.—SPECIAL CALLS TO COVENANTING.

The Committee of the Reformed Presbyterian Synod on Covenanting, in a circular addressed to the sessions of the different congregations, calling upon them to observe a day of special fasting and prayer, for seeking the guidance and support of the Church's Head, in relation to the work of covenant-renovation, mention the following reasons as constituting a distinct call to engage in the duty at the present time:—

"Dear Brethren,—You will probably think with us, that such as respect and love our Zion's covenanted testimony require to be gathered more closely together, that the bonds of brotherhood require to be strengthened, that this Church requires to have her sense of obligation, arising out of her covenant engagements, deepened, her spirit quickened, her energies aroused, and her determination fixed; and is there not reason to believe that the renovation of the covenants is a proper means by which to seek the attainment of these things?"

"Again, when we look abroad, what do we behold? The most evangelical churches, with few exceptions, are confederate with the State by oaths and gifts, and giving their influence to uphold and perpetuate Prelacy and

Erastian Presbyterianism in these realms. The Established Church, instead of being the bulwark of Protestantism, has, to a woeful extent, become a nursery for Antichrist; while Romanism, emboldened by the countenance of the State, and the hundreds that have been added to its ranks, has assumed such an arrogant bearing, and adopted such measures of aggression, as not only warrant, but imperatively call on Protestants of every shade to adopt the most efficient measures of opposition to one of the greatest enemies to God and his cause that exists on earth; and what measure so becoming the descendants of covenanted ancestors as the renewal of their covenants? What more becoming and effective testimony could be lifted against the threatening power of Antichrist, and the arrogant assumptions of Prelacy; what better adapted to reprove the unfaithfulness of such as have abandoned valuable reformation attainments, and to direct others to the good old platform, on which the truth was maintained and the battle of civil and religious liberty successfully fought, against arbitrary power and prelatical intolerance in a bygone age?"

V.—DIRECTIONS OF THE COMMITTEE OF SYNOD FOR CONGREGATIONAL COVENANTING.

The following circular, which was issued by the Synod's Committee on Covenanting, proved useful to congregations in essaying the work of covenant-renaissance:—

*To the Rev. _____ with the Elders and Members of the
Congregation of _____*

REV. BROTHER AND DEAR BRETHREN,—The Reformed Presbyterian Synod, at its late meeting at Dervock, adopted a minute containing a recommendation to Presbyteries and Sessions to use diligence to prepare the congregations under their care for following up the work so auspiciously begun by Synod.

Synod's Committee on Covenant-renaissance, desirous to aid congregations in carrying out this recommendation, beg most respectfully to submit to you the following hints, adopted at their meeting, held on the 7th instant, which, it is hoped, may be useful, at least in contributing to uniformity in the manner of renewing the covenants in the several congregations:—

1. Respecting Ministers and Elders who had Covenanted at Dervock.

As congregational covenanting is but carrying out the work begun at Dervock, and as oaths should not be unnecessarily multiplied, Committee do not deem it expedient that the minister presiding, and such elders as had previously taken the oath, should repeat it, but would recommend them to go before the congregation in subscribing the bond.

2. Respecting Females.

Committee see no ground for excluding females, as such, from covenanting personally, and in the same manner as the males.

3. Should the work of renewal be connected with the Sacrament of our Lord's Supper?

Though some may find it expedient to connect the administration of this ordinance with that of the Supper, yet we believe that, in general, the

services specially belonging to a communion are sufficient for the season; and it would be better, at another time, to set apart one of the six working days to be observed as a day of humiliation. On that day let the "Confession of Sins," approved by the Church, be read and embodied in confession, in solemn prayer to God. On the evening of that day, as before a communion, let tokens of admission be distributed, in a constituted Session, to such as shall be admitted to the ordinance of covenanting to be observed on the following Sabbath.

4. Order to be observed in Renewing the Covenants in Congregations.

Committee recommend two ministers to co-operate on such an occasion, at least on the day of covenanting.

The services of the Sabbath may be—Introductory religious exercises, by the pastor; a discourse, suited to the work in hand, by his assistant—the exercises of that part of the day being closed in the usual way.

After intermission.

Let the persons having tokens of admission occupy that part of the house allotted to them, the tokens being taken up in the way that may be most convenient.

After prayer and praise, the pastor shall deliver a practical prefatory address, and administer the ordinance by reading the bond, the whole congregation standing. The persons covenanting shall lift and hold up the right hand during the reading of the section immediately preceding No. I., beginning with, "We, therefore, with all reverence and humility," &c. The hand shall also be lifted when the minister shall pause at the close of each numbered section; and, at the close of the reading of the bond, let an audible Amen be pronounced.

For the greater convenience, a few may subscribe in the house of worship, and the rest in their societies, and as soon as possible, that the paper may in a few weeks be returned to Sessions.

The well-known ability and zeal of the brethren in the ministry render it unnecessary for Committee to point out the means to be used to enable the people generally to comprehend the nature of the ordinance—to bring them to a thorough understanding of the matter of the Covenants, to show them reasons for the present renewal, the motives by which they should be influenced, and the objects at which they should aim.

Some may depend mainly on adapting public ordinances to the attainment of their object, and some may deem it necessary to come in closer contact with the people in their ordinary social meetings, or in meetings convened for the purpose, where the minister will have an opportunity of ascertaining, by examination, the knowledge and spirit of the people, giving explanations, answering objections, resolving doubts, and tendering to each such advice and counsel as his case may require.

Feeling the responsibility of our position, and the importance to the Church of a proper improvement of the time that may elapse before the renewal shall take place, we cannot refrain from offering, in the close, a few words of counsel to dear brethren about to renew their covenants, in regard to the inward and spiritual, as we have already done in regard to the outward and formal—

1. Read attentively the "Confession" now in your hands; carefully consider and endeavour to attain to a proper sense of the heinousness of the

sins confessed—national, ecclesiastical, and personal. Consider how much they are fitted to draw down Divine judgments on these lands, and lay to heart the goodness of God, manifested in his forbearing to inflict merited punishment.

Lay the “Act of Covenant-renovation” before you; read and ponder it, section by section; endeavour to comprehend, in their fullest extent, the duties, and to understand the doctrines to which it binds.

2. Enter heartily and sincerely into the work of self-examination; inquire in regard to the presence of a living faith appropriating Christ and all new covenant blessings—true evangelical repentance, abounding love, the obedience of faith, and hearty approval of the principles and duties of a covenanted testimony.

See that your determination to abide by the profession set forth in the bond be formed deliberately on the authority of the Word of God, and in dependence on the grace of God, and the guidance and support of the Holy Spirit. Surrender yourselves to Christ without reserve, remembering his own very solemn words—“He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that taketh not his cross and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.” “We beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.”

Finally, dear brethren, be much engaged in prayer in your societies, your families, your closets. Come to God in earnest, believing prayer; doubt not the fulfilment of his fullest, richest promises. You dishonour Him by doubting. Has He not said, “Ask, and it shall be given you?” “Is the Spirit of the Lord straitened?” “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.”

Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Yours in the Lord,

JAMES DICK, *Convener.*

WILLIAM RUSSELL, *Secretary.*

Dec. 1853.

VI.

The following Ministers, Licentiates, and Ruling Elders, renewed the Covenants at the Special Meeting of Synod, at Dervock, October 12, 1853; and afterwards appended their names to a copy of the *Act of Covenant Renovation*, engrossed on parchment:—

MINISTERS.

William John Stavely, D.D.
James Dick.
James A. Smyth.
Samuel Carlile.
William Toland.
James P. Sweeny.
Robert Nevin.
James Kennedy.
Josias A. Chancellor.

Samuel Simms.
Thomas Carlile.
Hutchison M'Fadden.
William S. Ferguson.
Robert Wallace.
Thomas Houston, D.D.
William Russell.
William M'Carroll.

LICENTIATES.

George Lillie.

James R. Thompson.

RULING ELDERS.

John Picken.
 George Kennedy.
 Samuel M'Keown.
 Henry Anderson.
 Samuel Pollock.
 James Finlay.
 Edward Hall.
 John Robinson.
 John M'Dougal.
 Thomas Galway.
 James Little.
 Hugh Thompson.
 James Sloan.
 Ephraim Chancellor.
 Robert Witherhead.
 Robert Reynolds.
 William Gregg.

John Simms.
 Samuel M'Bratney.
 Robert Beatty.
 Samuel Carlile.
 John Duncan.
 Samuel Darragh.
 William Clugston.
 John Hyndman.
 John Potts.
 James Reynolds.
 William Harvey.
 John Graham.
 John M'Fall.
 Moses Chesnutt.
 Francis Cane.
 Robert Clarke.
 John Beatty.

Of the Elders who took and subscribed the Bond, besides those who were members of Synod, the following were admitted to the Act of Covenant Renovation, on the recommendation of their respective Sessions, viz. :—

From *Kellswater*,—John Duncan, Samuel Darragh, William Clugston, and John Hyndman.

From *Knockbracken*,—Samuel M'Bratney, Robert Beatty, and Samuel Carlile.

From *Belfast*,—John Potts and James Reynolds.

From *Bailiesmill*,—William Harvey, Thomas Galway, and John Graham.

From *Ballymoney*,—John M'Fall, Moses Chesnutt, Francis Kane, and Robert Clarke.

Mr James Renwick Thompson, licentiate, and Mr John Beatty, elder, were from the Reformed Presbyterian Church, United States, America.

OPINIONS OF THE PRESS.

I.

A PRACTICAL TREATISE ON BAPTISM.

“An invaluable work. It is written with great clearness and perspicuity—characterized by a force and an eloquence of style which will not fail to interest the reader.”—*Rothsay Journal*.

“Dr Houston’s book is rich in lessons of personal edification. It is pre-eminently the best of its class with which we are acquainted.”—*Banner of Ulster*.

“The whole work is one of great interest, and merits public favour, both from the importance of the subject, and its powerful treatment.”—*Paisley Journal*.

II.

MEMORIAL OF COVENANTING.

“Dr Houston calls his work ‘A Memorial’ of Covenanting, because it contains a particular account of the recent renovation of the British covenants by the Reformed Presbyterian Synod in Ireland, of which the Doctor is a leading member; and he informs us that it originated in a desire to promote the proposal of renewing the same covenants by the Reformed Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. . . .

“The author commences by a copious introduction on the duty of ‘perpetuating the remembrance of God’s gracious dealings with his Church.’ This he finds not only warranted and enjoined, but largely exemplified in the Sacred Oracles. . . .

“Dr Houston’s remarks on this topic we regard as not only just and excellent, but as peculiarly seasonable, and we would see from his statements, though his space and his plan have not allowed him directly and specifically to advert to this, the duty and advantage of a judicial and faithful historical testimony in the Church. . . .

“In entering more formally on his subject, he takes up, and at great length dilates on, the *nature and warrantableness* of covenanting. . . .

“The concluding remarks on this part of the work are peculiarly deserving of attention. They are what he adduces in proof of his statement, that religious covenanting has been exemplified by the faithful in all ages, and by the Church in the best periods of her history. The Church of the living God, he avers, has always been a society in covenant, and that God’s faithful servants have ever esteemed it their highest privilege to avouch the Lord to be their God. . . . The Church’s covenant is *substantially* the same in all ages—embracing the profession of all revealed truth, obedience to all the precepts of the Divine law, faith in the Divine promises, the observance of Divine ordinances, and the advancement of the Divine glory throughout the earth. . . .

“It was not necessary that the practice of covenanting should be enjoined in the New Testament, because, being moral in its nature, it remained unabrogated and in full force; yet sacred predictions, referring to the new economy, declare the prevalence of solemn vowing and swearing to the Lord as among the privileges of the Gospel Church. . . .

“A number of instances of public social covenanting are brought forward in proof of his statement, that religious covenanting has been exemplified by the faithful in all times, and practised by the Church in the best periods of her history—showing from it satisfactorily, and in vivid and striking terms, not only the reasonableness of public and social vowing to the Lord, but that it has the obvious countenance of Heaven. And for the manner in which he has handled the subject of this leading section of his work, he is entitled to the gratitude of all true-hearted Covenanters. . . .

“Dr Houston calls next the attention of his readers to the ‘doctrine of covenant obligation.’ This department of his treatise the Doctor discusses in the same luminous and satisfactory manner as he does the parts already considered. He seems even to get stronger as he proceeds with his task, and to display here additional ability. We have seldom, indeed, found the doctrine of covenant obligation more satisfactorily explained and established than it is in the few pages assigned to it in this work. . . .

“The next section of his work Dr Houston devotes to ‘the continued obligation and renewal of the British covenants.’ For the continued obligation of these solemn bonds he has already prepared the reader by his remarks on religious covenants in general; and he now fixes on their being *moral* and *scriptural* as to their *matter*, and in the strictest sense national deeds. If they are national and scriptural, and the kingdoms that have entered into them have a moral identity from age to age, it inevitably follows that they are binding on posterity. In the last part of this section he gives ‘*testimonies* in favour of the continued obligation of the British covenants,’ and brings forward a collection of the very highest human authorities. . . .

“A very considerable portion of Dr Houston’s book is occupied with an account of the renovation of the National Covenants in the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Ireland; and the account which he gives is not only interesting, but must be exceedingly gratifying and encouraging to all who love the covenanted cause, and are longing to see it revived; and his concluding section on the ‘effects of covenant renovation, and the duties incumbent on covenanters,’ are also peculiarly judicious, and highly deserving of consideration. It is pleasing to find him stating the effects of the solemn work that have already manifested themselves in Ireland—in greater steadfastness in maintaining a testimony for the truth—in a higher measure of brotherly love than was before apparent—in increased exertions for the spread of the truth and the revival of practical godliness, and so forth. But we must forego at present the pleasure of dwelling on these closing parts of the work. . . .

“We have great pleasure in recommending the Doctor’s work to our readers. Both the friends and the enemies of the covenants ought to purchase it. It is greatly fitted to disarm of their prejudice the one, and to confirm and establish the other. We could willingly have enriched our pages by large extracts from it had we not already devoted to it so much of our comparatively limited space.”—*Original Secession Magazine.*

